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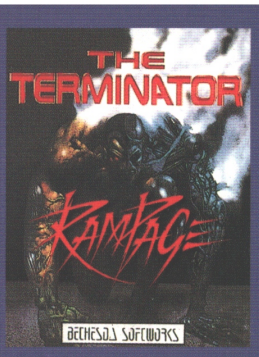

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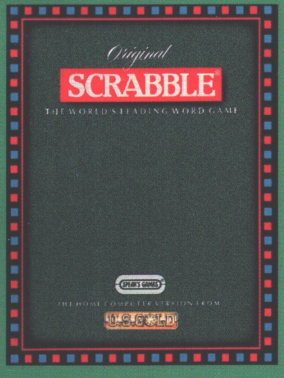

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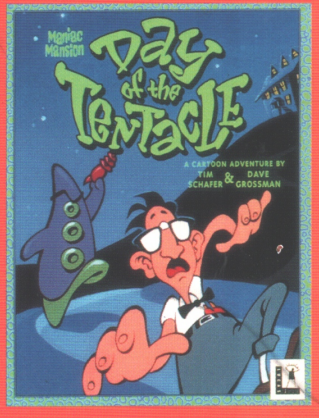

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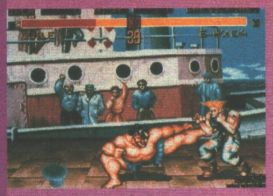

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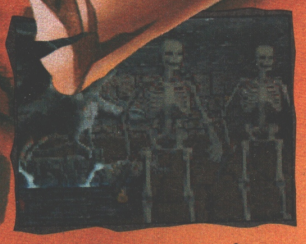

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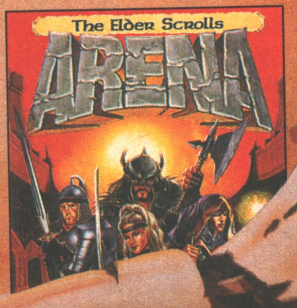

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WHAT

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welcome!

Yes, welcome indeed, ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, to this, the very first ever issue of What PC Games. The magazine you hold in your trembling, slightly moist hands is, we believe, the definitive guide to games-playing on your PC. As we so succinctly said on this very issue's cover "If you play games on your PC, you've got to read What PC Games!"

Get the idea? It's all about games, games, games and more games, not forgetting, of course, games. You'll find no boring techy features here, no articles on how to fit a soundcard to your SCSI port or whatever it is those anoraks in the other mags go on about. Nope, it's games all the way with us.

It's all about games, games, games...

Inside this bulging - nay! - throbbing publication you'll find much to amuse and inform you. In-depth reviews of all the big games... Previews of EVERY game planned for 1994... Playing guides and hints for some of the games you bought in 1993... Really, games magazines just don't get any better than this.

But hey! Enough of my yakkin'. Whaddya say? Let's boogie...

The Editor

WHAT PC GAMES

conten

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Cryptic quote: "...And they said it couldn't be done."

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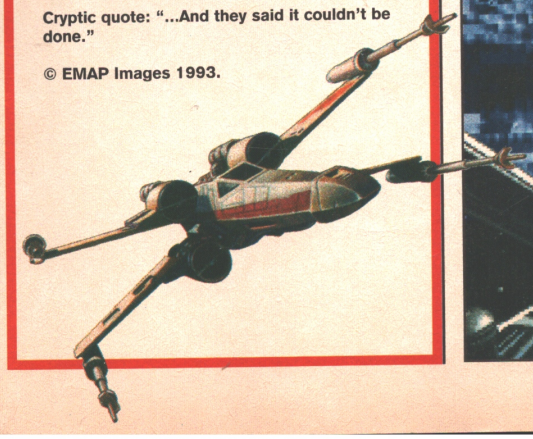

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The part of the magazine where we explain exactly what you can expect from What PC Games. Oh, you know that already? Sorry.

8 DISKS!
Working out how to install and play the four massive demos could be a bit tricky. Unless, of course, you read this.

14 THE DREAM MACHINE
What would you do if you won the Pools? Buy an expensive yacht? Emigrate to hotter parts? Don't be daft - you'd want to make your games-playing life as enjoyable as possible by snapping up all the tasty kit featured here. And then buying a yacht.

18 WIN THE ULTIMATE GAMES PC!
If all the sexy kit the Dream Machine consists of makes you feel a tad envious then why not spend over £3000 upgrading your PC? Or alternative you could win the lot in our amazing competition.

21 PREVIEWS
We like to think that we're just a little bit more thorough than most, which is why you'll find our four in-depth previews extremely gratifying.

37 1994 NOW!
Find out exactly what you can expect over the coming twelve months with our comprehensive look ahead. If you can't handle information overload then you'd better skip this bit - there are over a hundred new releases to digest!

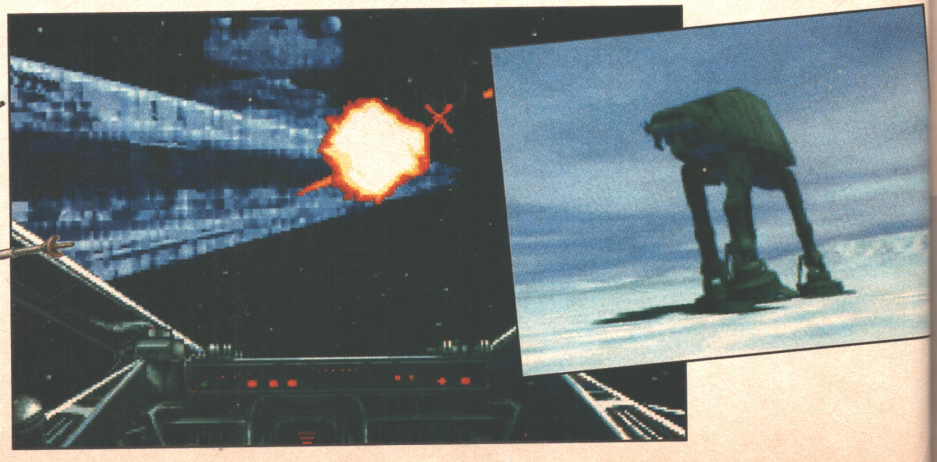
47 HOW DO THEY DO IT?
With Rebel Assault, LucasArts have maintained their impeccable track record and in terms of high quality games they are second to none. Journey with us into the heart of their empire and find out exactly how they do it.

52 GAMES GALLERY
What's better, Monkey Island 2 or Day of the Tentacle. Should you buy X-Wing or Privateer? Tough questions, we know, but ones we face almost every day. What you need is a definitive guide to the best games available. Which, coincidentally, is what Sir Harvey Barrington hosts here.

57 REVIEWS
We've scrutinised all the games bidding for the Christmas Number One spot in our huge reviews section. Find out exactly how good Rebel Assault is, how brilliant Sam and Max is, how smart TFX is and, er, how average Cosmic Spacehead is.

REBEL ASSAULT 58

This is quite possibly the closest we'll ever come to appearing in Star Wars, so put on a black waistcoat, team up with a hairy goat and take to the skies in our EXCLUSIVE review of LucasArts' stunning arcade extravaganza.



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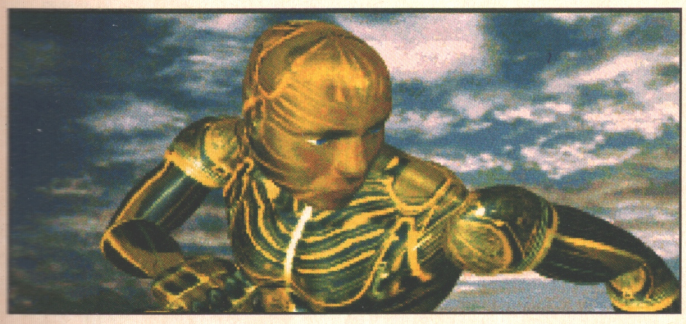
THE LAWNMOWER MAN....30

It's based on the film, it's on CD-ROM and it's got graphics like you would not believe. And the good news is it seems like it's going to play as brilliantly as it looks.



105 "PCs ARE CRAP!"

Fed up with messing around with auto/exe/sys/config.bat? Depressed at how long it takes you to get a mouse up and running? Yes, we are too, as you can find out here.

109 POWER UP!

If you're one of those people who likes to complete a game before you even think about purchasing another then Power Up! is most definitely for you. We've tipped Frontier, solved Innocent Until Caught, done everything there is to do in Simon the Sorcerer, finished Jurassic Park, completed...

WIN! GAMES PC WORTH £3000!!! Turn to page 18...

126 YOURS - FOR LESS THAN A FIVER

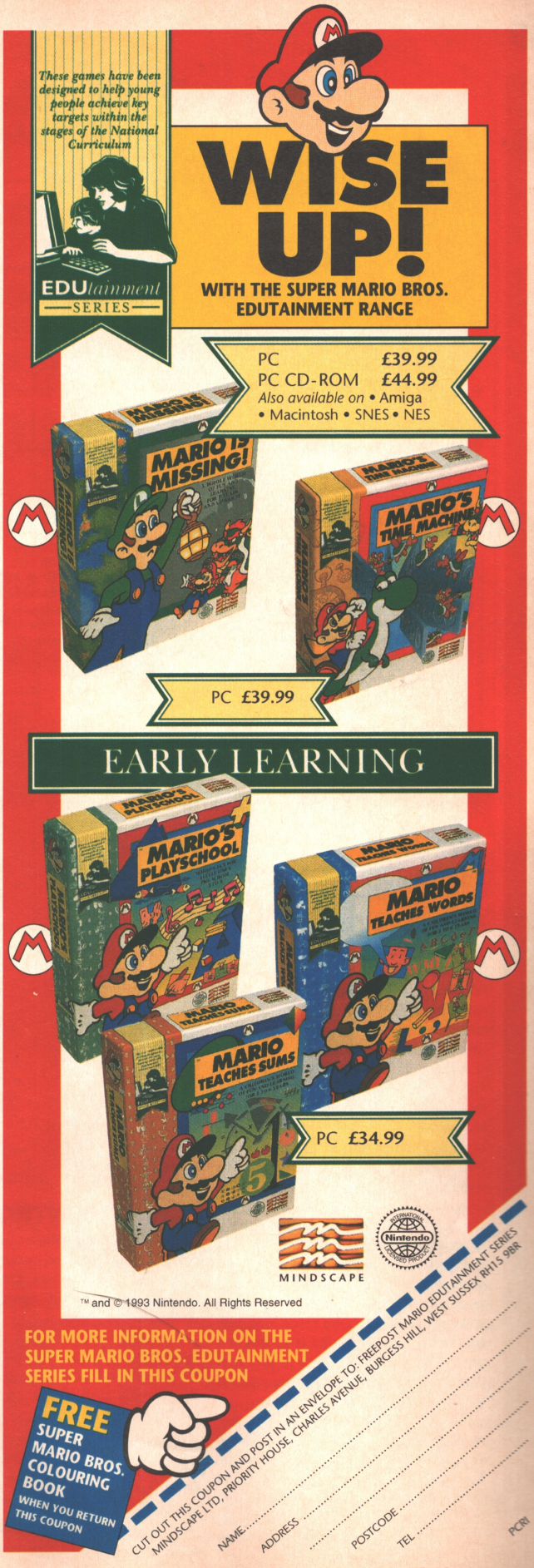
Yes, guv. Find out how you can pick up loads of top games without getting a mortgage or doing illegal deals with some bloke down the car boot sale.

130 BYE BYE!

It's over. And we haven't even started. As the song goes: "We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when..."

SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD 100

...and end up with sore knuckles, probably. Find out whether a dog and a rabbit can continue where a mutant tentacle left off as we rate LucasArts' hilarious graphic adventure.



disks!

Two high density coverdisks! Over 7.5Mb of playable demos! Yes, we can't believe either. No fewer than three exclusive demos and one great shareware game have been painfully but firmly squeezed onto the What PC Games coverdisks. How can you play them? What do you do? Read on dear reader, read on...

LOADING YOUR COVER DISKS

(1) Remove your disks from their beautifully crafted protective wrapping and put the disk of your choice gently into your disk drive.
(2) Type **A:** (or **B:** depending on the drive type) and then press the **Return** key to log onto your WPCG disk.
(3) Type the legend **WPCG** and press the Return key.

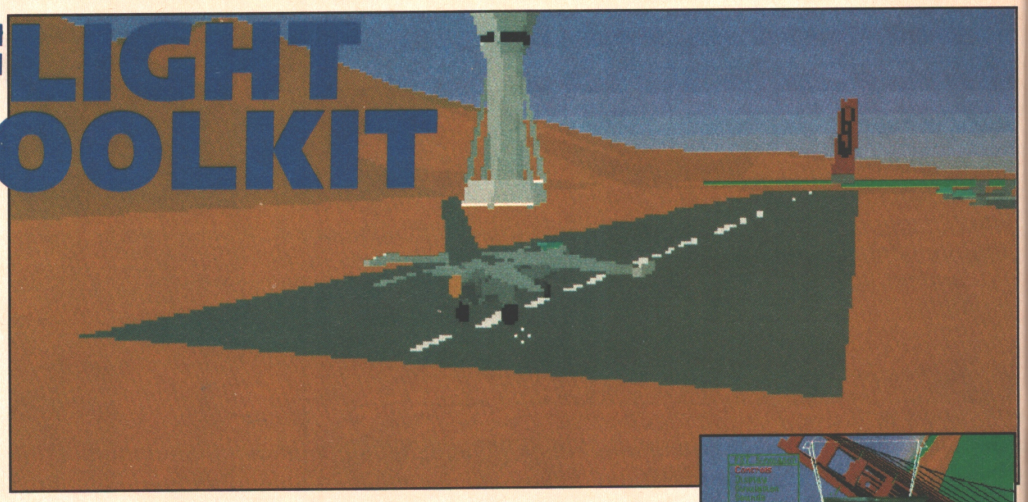
DISK 1

THE FLIGHT SIM TOOLKIT
SABRE TEAM
T2

DISK 2

HALLOWEEN HARRY

THE FLIGHT SIM TOOLKIT



Ever wanted to design your own flight sim? You could create a nice waterfront development, a few houses, shops, a bridge maybe and then you could take to the skies and level it with your F-16.

By the time you read this, Domark's Flight Sim Toolkit will have been launched, a game/game designer that makes all this possible. FST lets you create a whole world from scratch; hills, lakes, buildings, AA batteries, the works.

In this demo, sadly you don't get the toolkit part of the game (there'd be no point you buying the full version would there?) but you do get to fly around and shoot things. Swoop low over hills, barrel-roll through chiselled valleys, destroy ground targets and fly under bridges. The idea is to get the plane up in the air, test it out and explore this world specially created for you by Domark.

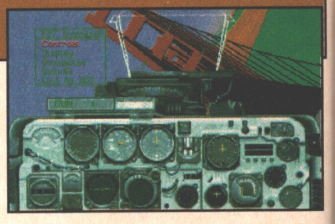
To get going, log onto the directory where you have chosen to install the Flight Sim Toolkit demo and type **fstcover**. This will decompact the FST archive file to your hard disk. When this is complete, type **fly** at the DOS prompt to start the game.

FLIGHT CONTROLS

Press **ESC** to access the options menu. Choose your preferred control method (e.g keyboard, joystick, small pot of muesli) and press **ESC** again to return to the demo.

Remember, the FST demo is extremely unforgiving and once you hit the ground, you're dead and it will dump you right back to the DOS prompt.

Engine Off/On	**E**
Increase Throttle	**=**
Decrease Throttle	**-**
Throttle Min/Max	**1-9**
Zero Throttle	**UNDERSCORE**
Max Throttle	**SHIFT PLUS**
Left Rudder	**COMMA**
Right Rudder	**FULL STOP**
Fire Weapon	**SPACE BAR**
Select Weapon	**BACKSPACE**
Drop Flare	**F**
Drop Chaff	**C**
View Controls	**F1-F10**
Look Back	**SHIFT F1**
Outside View	**O**
Chase View	**V**
Zoom In	**PAGE UP**
Zoom Out	**PAGE DN**
Pause	**P**
Shading Off/On	**ALT S**
FST Menu	**ESC**
Fast Time	**ALT Z**
Quit FST	**ALT X**



AARGH! HELP ME! IT'S NOT WORKING!

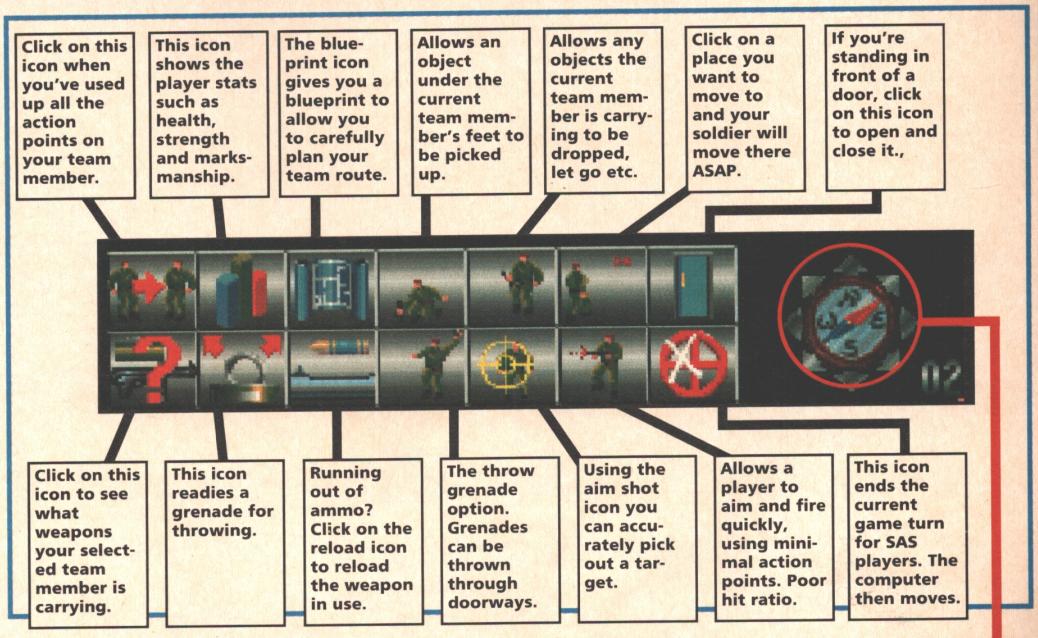
To run the FST demo you'll need at least 590K or more of free base memory and 2Mb of expanded or EMS memory (you can check both these by typing **MEM** at the DOS prompt). Please don't worry if you can't hear any sound because sadly there isn't any bar the rattle of your plane's machine gun.

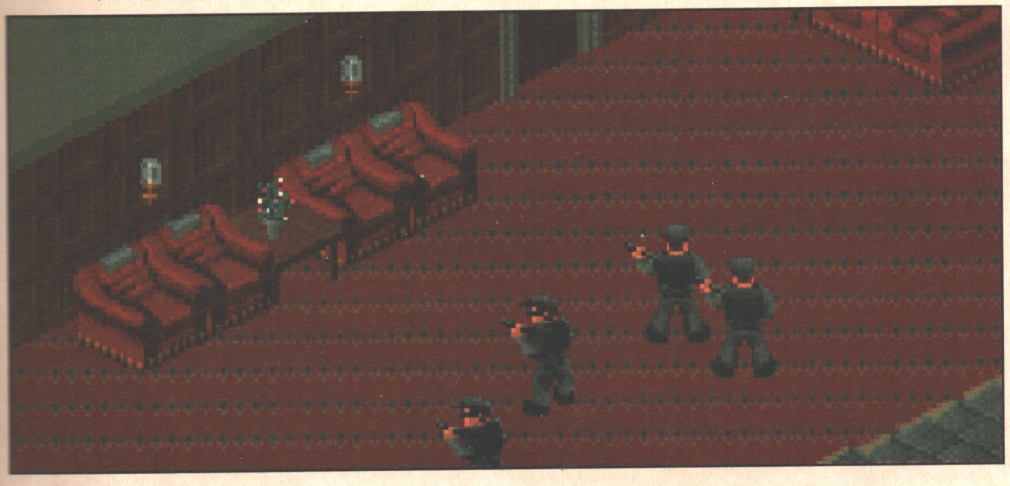
SABRE TEAM

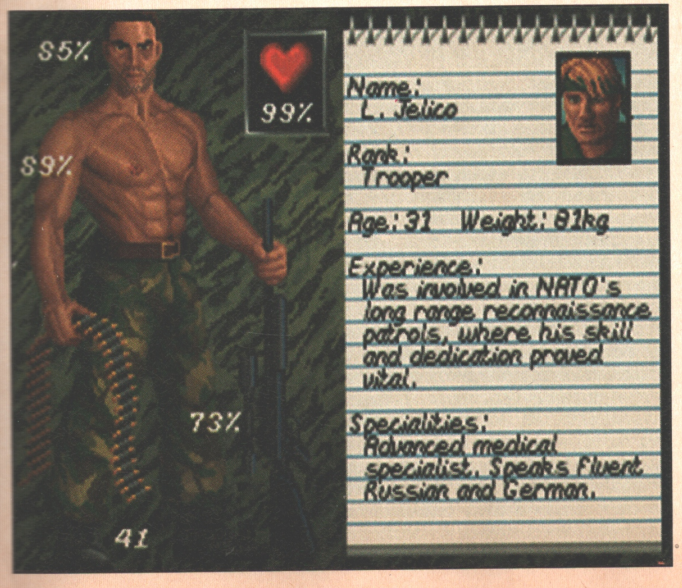
Krisalis' tense SAS sim is hard to pigeonhole. On one hand you could call it an RPG because you take charge of a SAS task force, while on the other you could call it an arcade game because you shoot people. Whatever it is, it's damned good, as you can now discover.

The object of this demo is to kill all the terrorists who are currently lurking deep within the depths of the besieged Embassy. You're given four SAS troops to control, each of which can carry a different set of weapons and tools. By placing your men at strategic locations within the building you will hopefully be able to take out the bad guys with minimum loss to your side. But enough of all this waffle — you want to know exactly how to play, don't you?

This demo requires a mouse so make sure your mouse driver is resident before you load it. Okay, now log onto the directory where you installed the Sabre Team demo and type **sabre** at the DOS prompt to start the game.







The best way to describe the way the game plays is to compare it to a turn-orientated board game such as HeroQuest. Each soldier you control has a set number of Action Points which deplete as you instruct him to carry out specific tasks.

After the intro, the opening screen gives you three main options. Firstly click on the middle option and choose your four team members by clicking on them with the mouse. Now click on the right hand picture to equip your team members.

Remember every item held weighs your team member down, decreasing the player's action points in relation to his strength. To choose a weapon scroll through the list at the bottom of the screen and click on it with the mouse. Obviously guns must be used with the correct ammo, so make sure you pick the right ones. If a member of your team is holding more than one gun the mouse pointer will change to a '?'. Select the desired gun by clicking over the gun description.

When all your team are prepared, exit weapons selection and click on the parachutist "deploy" icon. Your team members are deployed one at a time and any position marked with a cross is a valid drop off point. Click the left mouse button over the drop-off point to deploy a player. To scroll around the game zone move the pointer to the edge of the screen and click the right mouse button.

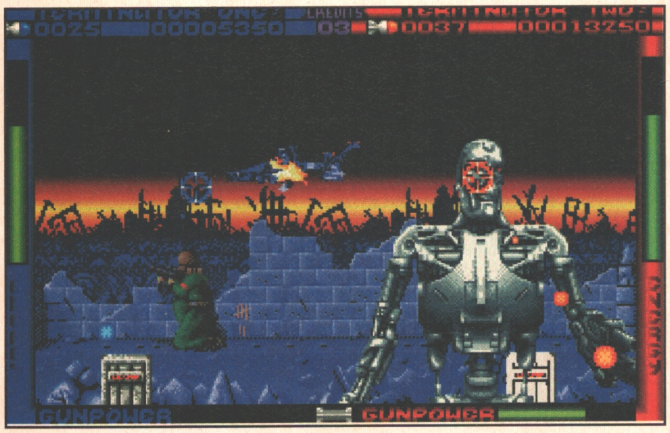
When all this is complete, click on the kneeling macho chap in the camouflage to start the game proper.

AARGH! HELP ME! IT'S NOT WORKING!

Sabre Team doesn't need any expanded memory and won't run if you have an EMM386 driver installed in your config.sys file. To overcome this, edit your config.sys using DOS edit or another file manager, or good old Windows 3.1 Notepad. Simply put a 'rem' statement in front of your EMM386 line e.g: **rem device = c:\dos\emm386.exe ram 3072**. Save your file again, reset and reload.

Another common problem is that the game crashes because the game code conflicts with some of the sound settings. This is easily resolved by typing **setup** while in the Sabre directory and changing your sound cards IRQ setting (the option at the bottom right) to either 5 or 7.

TERMINATOR 2 THE ARCADE GAME



After a long wait, the highly successful Terminator 2 coin-op game has been converted to the PC. Following the Operation Wolf tradition, T2 combines frantic 3D shoot-'em-up action with, er, even more frantic 3D shoot-'em-up action. Can you stop the Terminators from killing John Connor? Hone your blasting skills in this exclusive playable level from Virgin's latest arcade game. Got a friend? You can even play a two player game...

T2 is best played using a mouse so make sure your mouse driver is resident before you load it. Log onto the directory where you have installed the T2 demo and type **t2** at the DOS prompt to start the game.

When the game has loaded, choose your control method on the option screen (you can define your own keys) and whether you are going to play a one or two player game. The idea of the game is simply to shoot everything that moves. To get you out of rough spots you're also equipped with a limited supply of missiles.

Power-ups and extra ammo and grenades can be collected and added to your arsenal by shooting the crates that appear at the the bottom of the screen. And remember - try not to shoot your own troops. It isn't big or clever.

To quit from T2 I'm afraid you've got to reach for the reset button.

AARGH! HELP ME! IT'S NOT WORKING!

It's EMM386 mangle time again - will two PC games ever run the same without major internal tampering? I doubt it. If you're happy editing config.sys files then open it up and add a NOEMS statement to the end of the EMM386 line. It should then look like: **device = c:\dos\emm386.exe NOEMS**. Reset the machine and load T2 as per instructions.

But if the thought of config tampering fills you with dread, WPCG have included both a sample config file and autoexec file on the coverdisk.

So if you're having problems, simply follow these instructions.

(1) Put WPCG disk 1 back into your disk drive.

(2) Log onto the root directory of your C: drive (type **cd **) and then type: **copy config.sys config.dpe** (the file extension can be your initials, dpe are mine).

(3) Type: **copy a:config.t2 c:config.sys**

(4) remove the coverdisk from the drive and reset your machine.

What this does is save your machine's config.sys file as config.dpe (or whatever you called it) and replace it with the T2 config file from the cover disk. Don't worry, this isn't a major change. When you've finished with the T2 demo simply return your config.sys file back to normal by returning to the root directory "C:\" and typing: **copy config.dpe config.sys** and rebooting your machine.

HALLOWEEN HARRY

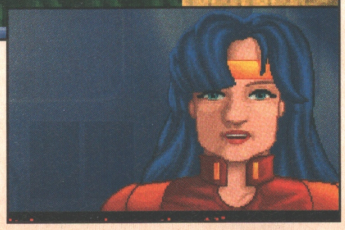
Aliens have taken over the Earth in this superb platform adventure from shareware specialists Apogee. Guide Harry (god knows where the Halloween came from) over five dangerous levels, shooting the zombies, rescuing the humans, switching the switches and riding the elevators. Have you got what it takes to free mankind?

To load Halloween Harry, log onto the directory where you have installed the Halloween Harry demo and type **harry** at the DOS prompt to start the game.

Halloween Harry is such a comprehensive game that the instructions are included. Simply use the cursor keys to highlight "instructions" and press return. There are also in-game hints and directions as you play.

AARGH! HELP ME! IT'S NOT WORKING!

You shouldn't have any problems with Harry at all. If the sound isn't working when you load the game up, go to the game options screen and click on the Sound Blaster and the Music options. Harry works with PC sound, but I warn you, it isn't very good. When you do manage to get the sound working, I suggest you quit out and start the game again just to hear the hugely atmospheric soundtrack to the intro.



MY DISKS DON'T WORK!

Due to the massively huge number of disks that are duplicated, the occasional might be a touch faulty. If you're unlucky enough to get one of these, don't despair because help is at hand.
Whatever you do DON'T SEND THEM TO US! Simply send them off to the following address with an SAE for 28p:

What PC Games bodged disks
PC Wise,
Dowlais Top Business Park,
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If you think you can solve your problems over the phone, try calling the disk helpline on (0685) 350505. The helpline is open between 10.30am and 12.30pm on weekdays.

THE FINE PRINT BIT

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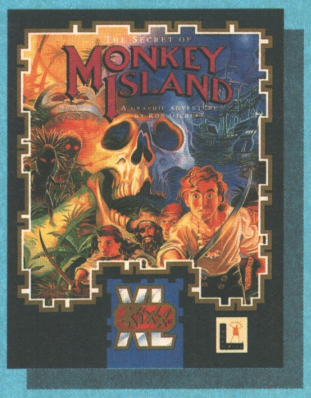

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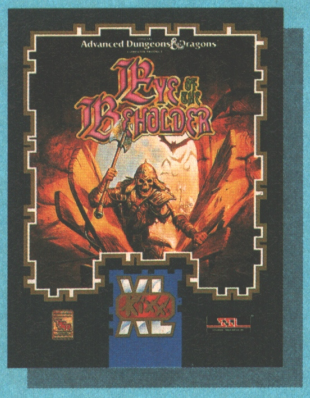

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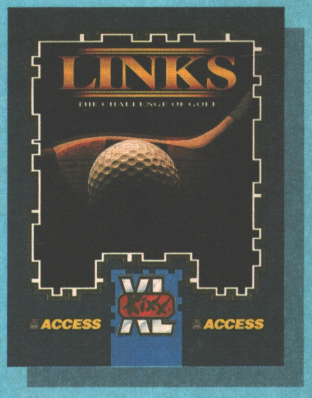

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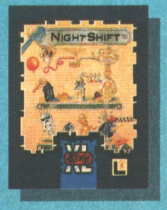

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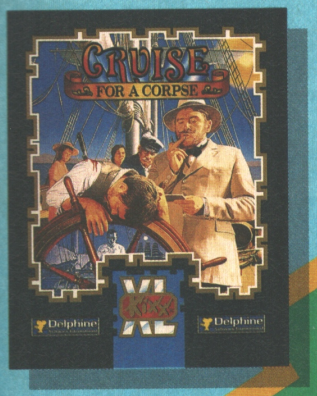

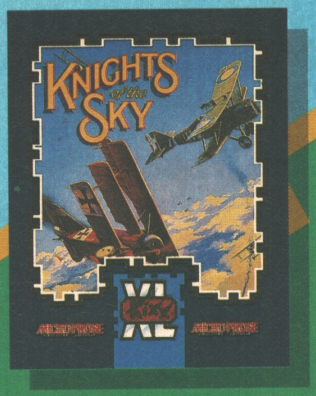

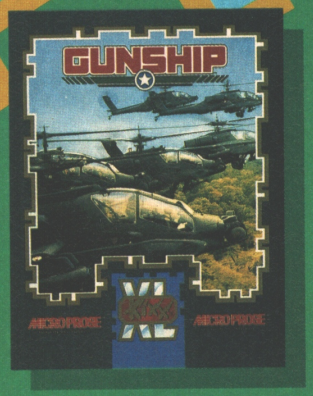

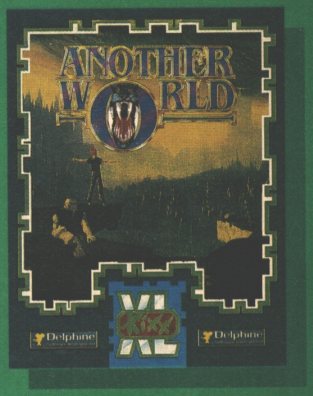

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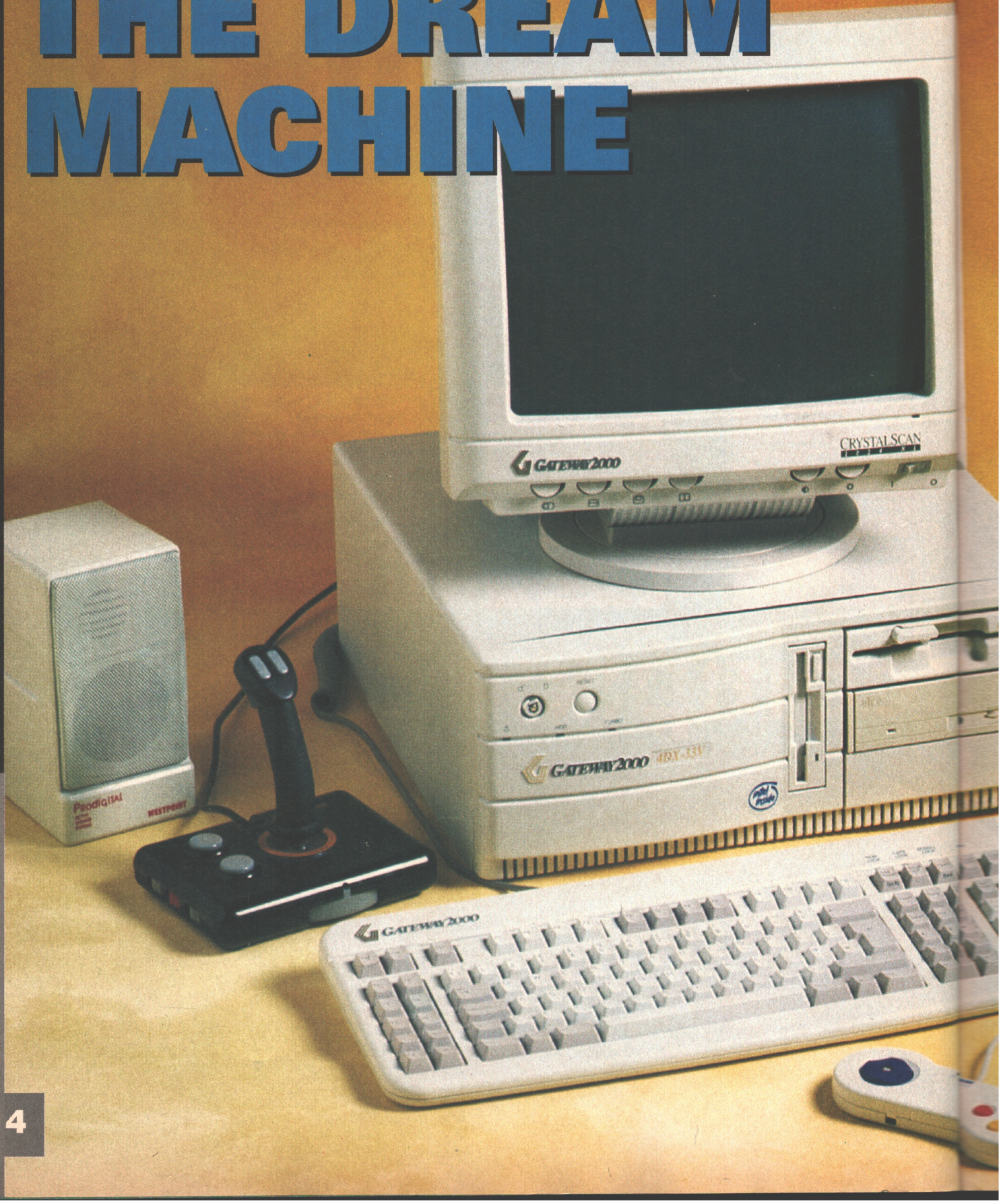
THE DREAM MACHINE



Okay, so you want to buy a PC. But there are so many to choose from. And, on top of that, you've got to decide which gadgets to go with it! It's a positive nightmare for the uninitiated. Let John Bennett help soothe your torubled brow with this guide to the best in PCs and add-ons.

The funny thing with the PC is that it's not all there. Not that it's a couple of cans short of a six pack or anything, just that you usually pay for the basic system and then add to it. This is totally the opposite of the all-in-one console approach, which comes with the sound, graphics and control system already sorted.

But starting with the bare bones of a games machine is not a bad idea. You get to choose exactly what you want to have, you can always improve it to keep up with the latest monster game from the likes of Origin, and you can add new bits if your interests wander off in a particular direction. The only catch is that you have to pay for it.

But let's say for the sake of argument that money is no object and I'm out to put together 'the ultimate games PC'. The fastest, meanest, best sounding, all-round games machine I can get my hands on.

It'd start off something like this: a 66MHz Carrera Pentium Station PC (£3,500) - they just don't come any faster. Add to that a 1Gb SCSI hard disk (say £500), 20Mb of RAM (say £240) and a massive 21" PanaSync SVGA monitor (a snip at £1,670).

Pausing quickly for breath, I can then add the finishing touches. This would begin with a quad speed Pioneer DRM-604X multiplay CD-ROM drive (£1,280) which holds up to six CDs at a time and moves like lightning. Can't live without it... Next, a ReelMagic MPEG video card (£399) for movies and full-motion video games, and Roland ATW10 (£449) and Sound Blaster Deluxe (£350) soundcards for a combination of sweet sound quality and games compatibility

To round things off, it would need a Dataflex Rapier Plus 14,400-baud modem (£599) to take on the neighbours at Falcon 3.0, a joystick-splitter cable (a mere £9.99), two Advanced Gravis Analogue Pro and two Koenix Speed King joysticks (£34 and £10.99 each respectively). Last but not least, a pair of floor-standing Sony hi-fi speakers (say £150) and a Nad amplifier (around £180).

That should set me back, oh, about £9,750. Oh yes, and I want it in matt black. All of it. Cash or cheque?

MEANWHILE, BACK ON PLANET EARTH...

Okay, maybe that's going a bit too far. Just a tad. But we can still put together a superbly good gamesplayer's PC without paying silly money - a 'sensible ultimate games PC'.

As far as the basic system goes, Pentiums are a no-no. Prices for these are way too steep, from £2,500 up to ten grand, and they haven't even ironed out all the bugs yet. So skip that idea.

So it's got to be a 486 PC. The 386 just can't cut it with this year's games, or even some that came out over a year ago. You can try playing something like Strike Commander on a 25MHz 386, if you want - it's your funeral. And playing a big game on a 286 is like entering the Monaco Grand Prix in a Reliant Robin.

Now for the processor. Top of the range is the Intel 66MHz DX job, but a 33MHz DX will do nicely. Anyway, this isn't as important as it used to be because you can always slot in a faster chip without breaking the bank nowadays.

Next up, it needs a big hard disk, say 170Mb or better. PC games get bigger every week, and if you add just a few well known games you'll soon see that space quickly disappearing. Try adding Ultima UnderWorld 2, MicroProse Formula One Grand Prix, TFX and Lemmings 2 and you wave goodbye to well over 70Mb.

After that, there's RAM. 4Mb is rapidly becoming the minimum for games. Let's have 8Mb instead.

Finally there's got to be something to watch it all on. I'd go for a 15" SVGA colour monitor (that extra inch makes

THINGS TO DO WHEN BUYING A PC...

- Confirm exactly what you are buying and the price, stating all the details in writing and keep copies.
- Make sure the advertised price includes all of the bits you need.
- Check the delivery date.
- Always pay by credit card if at all possible. If that's not possible, then a crossed check or cash on delivery is the next best bet.
- Try to find out details of the company's background, and be particularly wary of Post Office box numbers on adverts.
- Check the warranty and support arrangements that come with the PC. Find out if the support deal is insured if the supplier goes bust.

all the difference...) and the PC should have a Super VGA graphics accelerator or, better still, a Local Bus graphics card, to go with it.

The rest of it should be pretty standard so, fingers crossed, it'll come with a 3.5" floppy disk drive, a games port, mouse, keyboard, DOS 6.2 and Windows 3.1.

That little lot is a bit more reasonable but it's still going to cost a fair old whack, say around £1,200 all in. If you shop around a bit, it's easily possible to get a good games PC with a similar specification for around £850.

But be very wary of adverts for real bargain PCs, because if someone's offering a 66MHz 486DX PC with all the trimmings for five hundred quid or so, then it's a fair bet bet that it'll turn out to be a real dog. Selling PCs is a racket at the best of times, and you're better off paying extra for a bit of peace of mind.

I've just finished testing several high street PCs which all make good games machines, and I've also had good PCs from Compaq, Acer, Opus, Viglen, IBM, Elonex, Dell and Dan. If I had to plump for one right now, I'd probably go for the Gateway 2000 486DX/33. It's neat, well-designed inside and out, very quick and well made. Bar the 15" monitor it fits the bill exactly.

So that's the bare bones PC settled. But all that buys you is a machine that'll play your standard floppy-disk games (albeit very well), sounds roughly like a dog farting in a lift and only has the keyboard for controls. Next come all those extras to finish of the job properly.

If you can get a PC with them included in the price, so much the better. But if you really want a tailored system that performs better for the money then it's a bit like buying a hi-fi, you're better off going for the bits separately.

CD-ROM DRIVES

CD-ROM games are really starting to come into their own now, with many publishers deciding to release CD titles first then disk-based stuff later (mostly because CDs are cheaper for them to produce). If you don't want to miss out on potentially brilliant CD-ROM only games like Rebel Assault, Inca II and Microcosm, a CD-ROM drive is a definite games essential.

External CD-ROM drives are expensive, and frankly the cost outweighs the convenience so they're really not worth bothering with. In which case you're looking for a well-made internal dual-speed drive with fast access times and data transfer rates. NEC, Panasonic, Sony and Hitachi all make decent drives, but my first choice without any question would be the Toshiba KT-3401SAK. It's a fast, dual-speed MPC drive with a SCSI connector and audio CD compatibility. It also costs £595... but it's worth every penny.

The Gravis Analogue Pro and (below) the Konix Speedking - two top joysticks.

If you do want to watch the pennies, the cheapest of the bunch is Mitsumi's £149 single-speed drive. This does the job, but only just. A big CD-ROM game, like Dune or 7th Guest will positively crawl along. Mind you Mitsumi has just released a faster drive for £179 which could be worth a look.

JOYSTICKS

There are all sorts of weird and wonderful games controllers around, ranging from simple one-button joysticks to flight yokes with footpedals, gamepads, and steering wheels. There also seems to be some bizarre competition among the manufacturers to make them look as phallic as possible. This isn't easy with a steering wheel, but it doesn't stop them trying.

What you end up buying depends on the type of game you like to play. Any sort of flight sim needs an analogue stick, arcade games need a digital one, sports sims or racing games will make do with either and combat games need all the buttons you get on a gamepad.

The difference between analogue and digital sticks is simply that analogue sticks detect degrees of movement, so they're smoother and more responsive to use, while a digital stick simply registers the fact that you want to turn or move in a particular direction.

Most gamesplayers go for more than one style of game so the best bet is to have a couple of different sticks. There are plenty of good analogue joysticks around because the PC has such a long (and tedious) history of flight sims. My favourites are the ultimate willy-lookalike, the Advanced Gravis Analogue Pro (£34) as an all-rounder, or the Flightstick Pro (£79.95) specifically for aerial and space combat.

The best bet for a good digital cheapo is without a doubt the Koenix Speed King (£10.99). Despite a tendency to leave you with one wrist twice the size of the other, they work well, have two buttons and an autofire. They don't last too long in my experience but they're cheap.

If you're into mindless brutality, on the other hand, there's no substitute for the Advanced Gravis Joypad (£34) when it comes to figuring out those special moves.

● There's one big problem with the PC and joysticks. The miserable machine doesn't get on with the idea of two at a time. So next on the shopping list is a joystick splitter cable (they're available from Creative Technology for a mere £9.95 - why cut corners?).

SOUNDCARDS

These will soon be included with PCs as standard with any luck. The fact that they're not already is a hangover from the days when the PC was just another boring lump of metal in the office.

It has to be said that the PC is spoilt for choice when it comes to soundcards - Orchid, Media Vision, Advanced Gravis, you name it, there are plenty of good cards for the PC.

For sheer sound quality the Roland card is head and shoulders above the rest. It'll give you music, machine-gun fire and screams like you've never heard them before. Sheer bliss.

Unfortunately it costs an arm and a leg. Well, £400 anyway. Since Ad Lib went bottom up a few years back there's been only one real standard in PC soundcards - the Creative Technology Sound Blaster. It's not the best sounding card on the market by a long chalk, but it does a pretty good job and it works with everything near as damn it. It's no fun having the best sounding card there is only to find that the game you've just bought doesn't support it. So the vote goes to the Sound Blaster Pro 16 SCSI2, priced at £219.

SPEAKERS

Most speakers you can buy for PCs are, in a nutshell, crap. Cheap, plastic and tinny - they don't even make decent bookends. I can't think of one set I'd want to pay money for.

If you're spending any reasonable amount of money on a good soundcard you're better off wiring the whole lot up to your hi-fi amplifier and speakers, which happens to be dead easy anyway. Otherwise, don't expect too much.

MODEMS

This might seem like an odd extra for a games machine, but there are a lot of games out there that feature multiplayer modem support, like F1GP, Air Warrior and Falcon 3.0. If there's a chance of playing against live opponents over the phone lines, why not go for it?

You don't need a fast modem, either. I'd recommend the Dataflex Pocket Gem (£119.99), because it just plugs into the back of your PC, no fuss, and it's about the size of a cigarette packet.

WHERE ARE MY CONTACTS?

Okay, so we've given you a rough idea of what your games-playing PC should have bolted onto it. If you want more details about the various bits and bobs mentioned try giving these geezers a call...

- **Creative Technology: (0743) 248590.**
- **Dataflex Designs: (081) 543 6417.**
- **Toshiba: (0932) 841600.**
- **Roland: (0252) 816181.**
- **Zye Technology (Advanced Gravis): (0293) 538666.**

endurance

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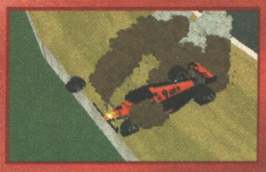
It's you against real IndyCar drivers. Race the actual tracks from the IndyCar Circuit: Michigan Int'l, Nazareth PA, Laguna Seca, Portland Int'l, Milwaukee, Louden NH, Toronto, Long Beach. Choose from many of the car set-up options actual teams do. Develop your skills. Make the same tough decisions they face every race. All in stunning graphic detail far beyond any racing simulation ever offered before.



speed

distance

Virgin

PAPYRUS™

WIN!

THE ULTIMATE GAMES PC!

PLUS! A copy of EVERY game reviewed in this issue to play on it!

Bite and believe it, readers! Christmas cheer (or, more likely, beer) has affected the mind of Lord 'Scrooge' EMAP who, in a totally uncharacteristic fit of generosity, has dug deep in his ermine-lined pockets to stump up the cash for possibly the most spectacular prize ever given away in a computer games magazine! (And remember, we did say probably so don't write in saying "But PC Crap offered its readers an all-expenses-paid holiday on Mars" or something.)

Just take a look at the bundle of goodies we're itching to give away:

- Gateway 2000 DX33 486PC, including 14" S-VGA colour monitor, 170Mb hard disk, 4Mb RAM, 3.5" floppy drive, programmable keyboard, mouse, DOS 6.0 and Windows 3.1!
- Toshiba KT-3401SAK top-of-the-range double-speed CD-ROM drive!
- Advanced Gravis Analogue Pro joystick for general use and an Advanced Gravis Gamepad for playing the beat-'em-ups!
- Flightstick Pro joystick for those flight sims!
- Konix Speed King joystick for the arcade games!
- Sound Blaster SCSI2 for stunning 16-bit stereo sound!
- Dataflex Pocket Gem 2400-baud portable modem for fighting over the phone lines!
- Joystick splitter cable for two-player fun!
- Set of stereo PC speakers!
- Every game reviewed in this issue of What PC Games!

In total, this prize is worth OVER £3000!!! Yes, you read it right - £3000!!! (Note the three exclamation marks - as you can see even we're shocked.)

I'VE GOT MY PEN AND PAPER. WHAT DO I DO NOW?

It really couldn't be simpler. Well, it could but then the Editor might be tempted to enter under a false name so we've got to make it slightly difficult.

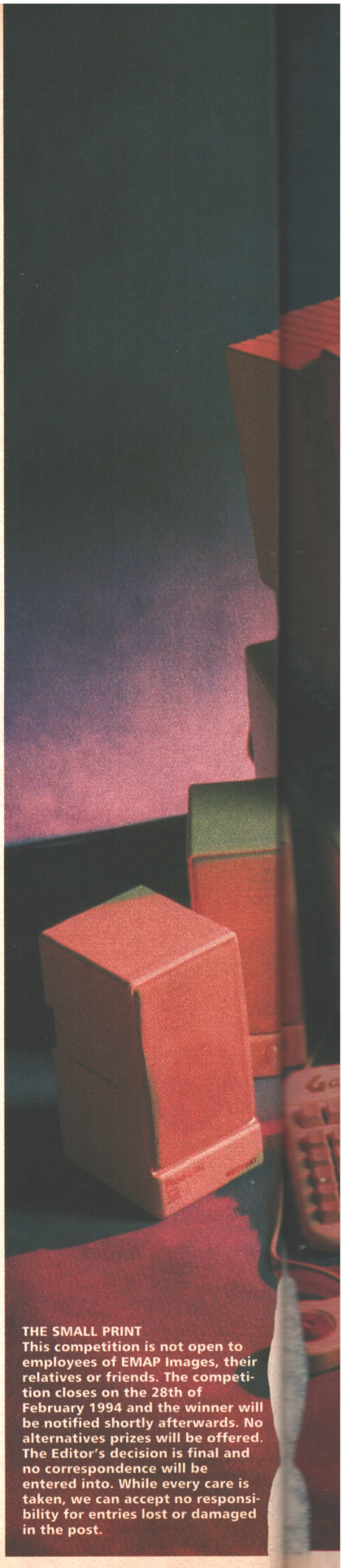
Anyway, enough of that. What we've done is taken the names of five famous PC games and scrambled them all up. All you've got to do is decipher these cryptic anagrams, write the game names down on a postcard or back of a sealed envelope, add your name and address and send them to: The "Blimey! That's good!" Compo, What PC Games, EMAP Images, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringon Lane, London EC1R 3AU to arrive at our offices no later than 28th February 1994.

The first person plucked out of the underpants (hat surely? - Ed.) will win the whole PC kit and kaboodle which, let us repeat, is worth over £3000!!! (Those three exclamation marks again.)

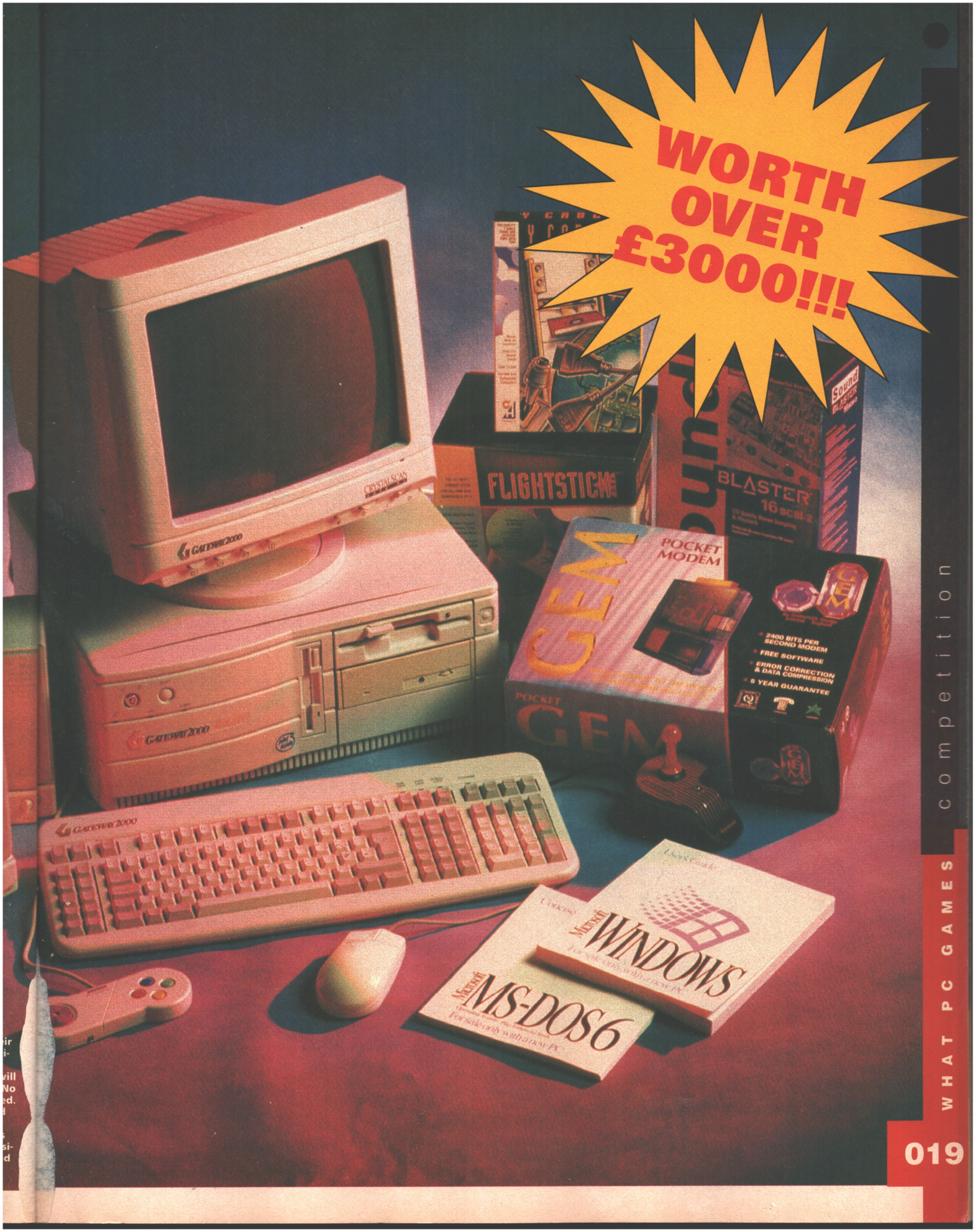
THOSE ANAGRAMS IN FULL

(1) TOFT HEAD CLEAN YET
(2) TRON FIRE
(3) XTF TFX
(4) AK RAD ON THE NILE
(5) U SELL SAT BEAR

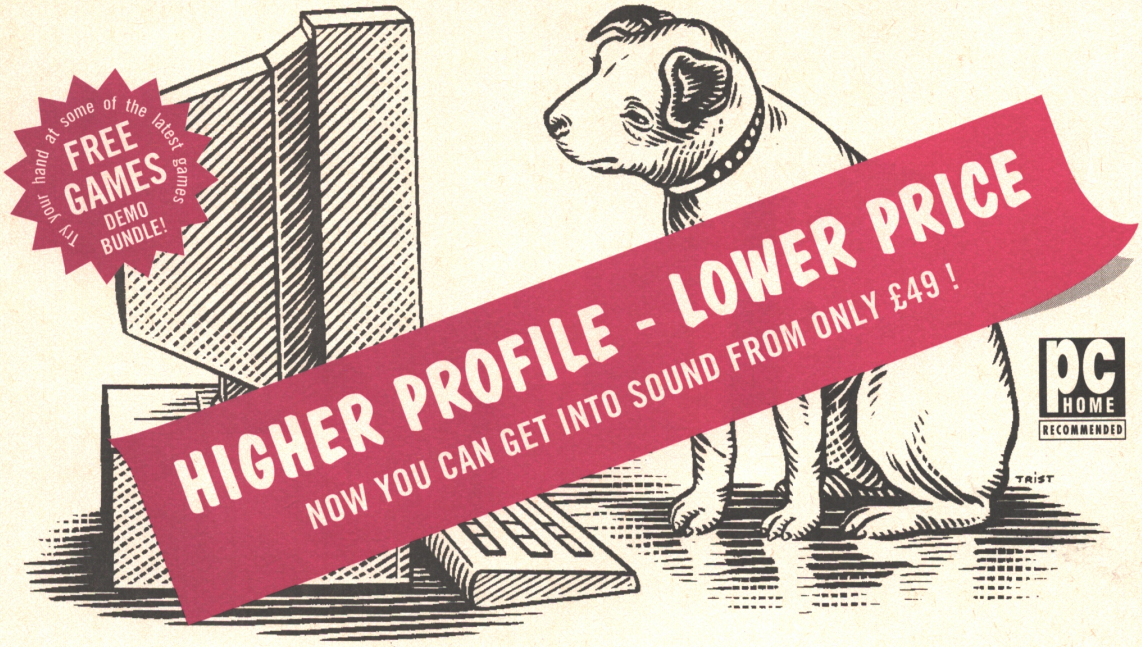
Good luck!



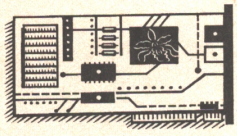
THE SMALL PRINT
This competition is not open to employees of EMAP Images, their relatives or friends. The competition closes on the 28th of February 1994 and the winner will be notified shortly afterwards. No alternatives prizes will be offered. The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. While every care is taken, we can accept no responsibility for entries lost or damaged in the post.


WORTH OVER £3000!!!
FLIGHTSTICK
BLASTER 16 SCSI-2
POCKET MODEM
GEM
POCKET GEM
2400 BITS PER SECOND MODEM
FREE SOFTWARE
ERROR CORRECTION & DATA COMPRESSION
5 YEAR GUARANTEE
GATEWAY 2000
CRYSTALSCAN
Microsoft WINDOWS
Microsoft MS-DOS 6

HIS MASTER'S CHOICE

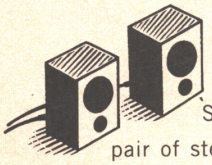


Orchid Sound Producer

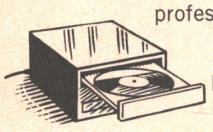


Since his master introduced Sound Producer, a year ago, to bring quality sound to his PC, astoundingly it's become the popular choice!

For Multimedia to games, fully compatible with SoundBlaster and AdLib, it's been *so* well received that *PC Home* made no bones about recommending it!



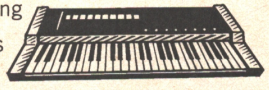
Which could be because the Sound Producer system includes a pair of stereo speakers, a built-in 4 watt amplifier and its MIDI interface affords access to the world of professional music production.



Or because Sound Producer/Pro - with 20-voice stereo FM synthesizer, CD ROM interface, software-controlled studio standard stereo mixer/volume, microphone and Voice Notes software - sounds even better!

What *is* clear is that its successful pedigree has enabled his master to take a bite out of its bark and cut its price to only £49 for Sound Producer and to £89 for Sound Producer/Pro!

So, if you want to run with the pack, take their lead, call (0256) 817722 - lines are open daily 8 'til 8 including weekends - for details of your nearest dealer, order the higher profile Orchid Sound Producer at a lower price... and make his master's choice!



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previews

Things never stop moving in the exciting, some would even say glamorous world of PC games. No sooner has a state-of-the-art, Gouraud-shaded, texture-mapped marvel been released than another is announced for release in the near future, promising to be even more state-of-the-art and feature even more technical frills, bells, whistles, flutes and piccolos. You don't want to get left behind by progress - you might make an embarassing faux pas at a dinner party in front of your PC gamesplaying friends - so here's where to come for an in-depth peer into the future.

THEME PARK, MAGIC CARPET & CREATION 22

It's Bullfrog's fifth birthday! And to celebrate they've invited us down to their HQ to see some of the super marvellous fantastic games in development! Gasp at Magic Carpet! Scream at Theme Park! Get equally excited over Creation!

ULTIMA VIII 26

Ultima is back - and it's bad! Well, actually it's not - it's looking very good. Which is why we thought it'd be a good idea to write this extensive preview of it, so that you can see how nice it is too. Grab your scabbard and we'll meet you on page 26.

THE LAWNMOWER MAN 30

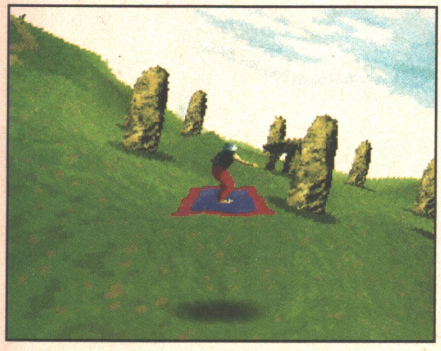
Okay, so the film was a bit of a duffer admittedly (although the Virtual Reality sections were a bit nifty) but it's shaping up to be a tippety-top game. From the bowels of Storm's south London HQ comes this no-holds-barred exposé.

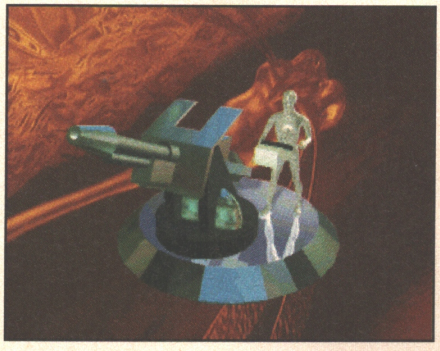
HEIMDALL 2.....34

First there was Heimdall, now there is Heimdall 2. Yes, the Norse hero-type person is back, and once again he's here to save the world - nay! - the universe from the evil Loki. We preview this apocalyptic isometric-3D battle coming soon from Derby coding whizzes Core Design.

1994 NOW! 37

That was all very nice, but what about all the other stuff coming out next year? What's that going to be like? Fret ye not, for in this massive eight-page preview section you'll find details on just about every major new game currently planned for release in 1994. Over one hundred games are previewed, including goodies like Mega Race, Rise Of The Robots, Stone Keep, Superfrog, Alien Breed 2 and Pacific Strike, to name but a minute fraction. It's big. It's beautiful. It's a lot of words and pictures. Get the idea?





WELCOME... TO BULLFROG PARK

PROJECT: THEME PARK/ MAGIC CARPET/CREATION

DEVELOPERS: BULLFROG

RELEASE: MID-TO-LATE 1994

Following hits such as Populous, Powermonger and Syndicate you wouldn't blame the boys at Bullfrog for wanting to take a break and rest on their laurels for a bit. But as it turns out the Guildford-based developers have never been busier. David Upchurch takes a look at three of the exciting new games they have in development...

It's hard to believe but Bullfrog is five years old this year. (They grow up so quickly, don't they? Be going to school soon.) But what a five years it's been. In that time the company has released an enviable string of hits (most recently Syndicate), started a new game genre with the classic Populous and established itself as arguably Britain's leading games developer.

That's not bad going for a company that started out as just two blokes - Peter Molyneux and Les Edgar - in a tiny room above a shop in Guildford. Now the company employs 32 full-time staff and resides in plush offices in the Surrey Research Park. In fact, Peter has just bought a brand new nine-bedroom house. And I'm not jealous one bit.

So what better time, then, to pop down to their HQ, grab a slice of the birthday cake (mmmm, chocolate - my favourite) and have a natter about some of their new projects in development for '94? Er... none.

THEME PARK

Of Bullfrog's multitude of projects in development the one nearest to completion is a strange little thing by the name of Theme Park. The game puts you in the shoes of a theme park operator, your task to build the biggest, most exciting and, more importantly, most lucrative entertainment centre in the world. Inject Sim City with a large dose of cuteness and you've pretty much got the idea.

Theme Park was born from Peter's first fumbling attempts at game programming all the way back in 1983. "At that time all you had to do was write a game where Space Invaders attacked Mars and you'd sell a billion trillion copies and be perceived as the greatest programmer ever," Peter recalls. "So I, in my infinite wisdom and blind stupidity, decided to write a business simulator called Entrepreneur. Even though no 12-year-old wants to play a business simulator, I still decided that it would be a really good game.

"I finished the game, play-tested it and was convinced that it would sell millions, even though it was text-only. I took an advert out in a national computing magazine and was convinced that I was going to have so many orders that I notified my local Post Office sorting depot and warned them of the impending avalanche of mail. At the time my office was in the corner of a warehouse and the day before the magazine with the advert in it was due to hit the streets I noticed that my letter box wouldn't be big enough to cope with all the envelopes. So after cutting a larger hole in the door, I believed I was fully prepared.

"The day the orders were supposed to come flooding through the door, I arrived at my office at 7.30 and waited for the sounds of the approaching postman. Finally, footsteps could be heard - which was odd, because I was expecting something like a dumper truck - and two envelopes popped through my huge letter box. Those two envelopes contained the only orders I ever got for the game. And I even suspect that one of those orders was from my mum.

"To this day, there's a hundred pound prize for the first person to complete the game and at that time a hundred pounds was a lot of money. I lived in fear for a good few years after in case someone tried to claim their reward.

"Despite its lack of sales, it was a really good game and fun to play and I've always been looking for ways to make it appeal to more people. Then one day the perfect idea hit me - I'd create a game where you control your own theme park.

But why set a business sim in the binary equivalent of Alton Towers?

"The roller coaster is the best ride," reckons Peter. "You can make it as safe or as unsafe as you want by adjusting individual slopes, corners and loops. You've got to watch out that you don't make it too dangerous otherwise people will complain."

"You can have all kinds of food emporiums - chip shops, ice cream shops, lemonade shops, hamburger shops, those kind of things," claims Peter. "You can even vary how much salt you put on your chips, the theory being that you can sell more drinks."

"Well, I love theme parks and it was a great excuse to do some research," smiles Peter. "It's also something where you often go and think 'If I'd designed this place I wouldn't have put *this* there, etc'. It's also something that people can immediately associate themselves with. If I told you that this game enables you to design theme parks then you immediately know what I'm talking about."

Although making your park a success is tough, actually building it is simplicity itself. From the bank of icons to the left of the scrolling play window you select your rides and then plonk them down in the window wherever you like. Then you can adjust other variables like admission prices, ride speed and so forth in a similarly easy 'point and click' way.

"We've designed the system to be as easy to use as possible," says Peter. "If you've ever used a paint package then you'll have no problems with Theme Park's interface. One of the main differences between this and, say, Sim City is that you're given the chance to experiment with layouts because you don't pay for anything until it's been there for a month. So you can design for your heart's content and not have to pay for doing so."

"We've designed the system to be as easy to use as possible. If you've ever used a paint package then you'll have no problems with Theme Park's interface."

PETER MOLYNEUX, Bullfrog.

Although the type and variety of rides is the most important factor in whether your park is a success, there are other things you have to take into consideration, like refreshment stands, picnic areas and so forth, all of which contribute to the overall enjoyment of the paying punters. There's also the problem of dealing with the queues that'll build up on the more spectacular rides. For a start you've got to provide enough space for people to actually queue in and you might also find it wise to employ a clown or juggling act to keep them entertained while they wait.

In fact, Theme Park cuteness and superficial simplicity conceal a hugely complex game engine that works out the effect of every major and minor variable on the park's visitors. If you want some proof of how tortuous the game's calculations can get, take a look at this:

```
E = t_p -> B - (t_s -> c/4) +
(K1 (t-s -> H + t_s -> T)) +
(K2 (t-p -> H + t - p -> T))
```

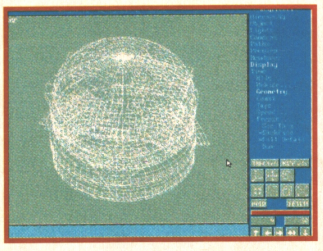
"The little people prefer the park to be aesthetically pleasing so you can plant trees and create little picnic areas," says Peter. "But then you have the problem of litter - bins and litter collectors need to be added to pick up all the wrappers and cans. Too much rubbish will obviously alter the look of the park."

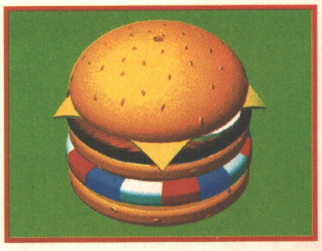
"If you feel that some of your rides are a bit sedate then you can alter the 'excitement level', which basically speeds things up," explains Peter. "The trouble with doing this, though, is that the faster a ride goes, the more likely it is to break down."

Believe it or not, this equation governs whether people will enter a ride or not. Of course, this all happens 'behind the scenes' so don't worry if you failed your maths degree.

"Theme Park is a game you can play on three completely different levels," explains Peter. "You can just see what it would be like to build a theme park. You can play it as a sim where you have to maintain the park and keep all the visitors happy. Or finally you can play it as the full-blown business game where not only do you have to design and build your own theme park, but also operate a healthy and successful business from it."

Whichever, Theme Park is a barrel of laughs and should go down a storm when it's released next Spring.





All the rides and buildings in Theme Park were drawn using a 3D modelling package. This hamburger stand, for example, was first drawn as a fully three-dimensional 'mesh' which was then overlaid with colours and textures to create the final graphic.

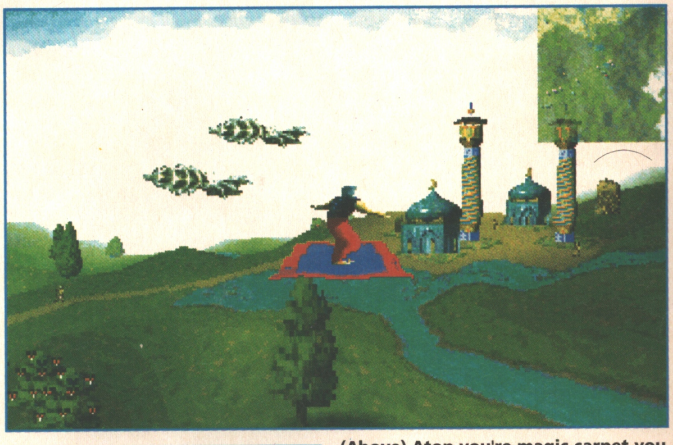
MAGIC CARPET

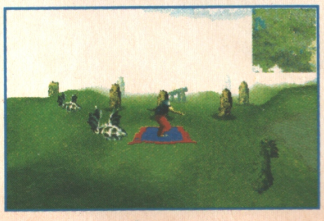
In purely visual terms, Magic Carpet is Bullfrog's most impressive game in development. As you might guess from the title it's set in a Arabian Nights-style fantasy world, with you cast as a lowly peasant boy trying to win the hand of a fair princess. (Or, if you wish, as a lowly peasant girl trying to win the hand of a fair prince - Bullfrog are nothing if not Politically Correct.)

With the game still seven or eight months from completion the game's structure is not fully worked out yet - like nearly all of Bullfrog's games that 'evolves' during development - but at the moment it looks like it will take the form of a series of quests set for you by the Grand Vizier. To help you you have a flying carpet and (literally) a handful of magic rings that you can use to cast a huge array of spells, all of which will help you complete your quests in one way or another.

Even at this early stage the game looks simply stunning. Although texture mapping is nothing new, it's never been seen to this level of detail before and everything moves extremely smoothly, even on a 386, creating a superb feeling of really flying a magic carpet. The objects in the game world are also texture-mapped polygons, so they don't go all blocky and horrible when you get close to them.

Throughout the game there are marvellous little touches that bring the fantasy world to life, like the way that if you fireball a tree it'll unsettle the birds that were resting in it and they'll fly away, or the way that the tide actually goes in and out. Such things are not essential to the game as such, but they help generate a real feeling of a living, breathing world. "Modern games are so detailed graphically," says Peter, "but there's





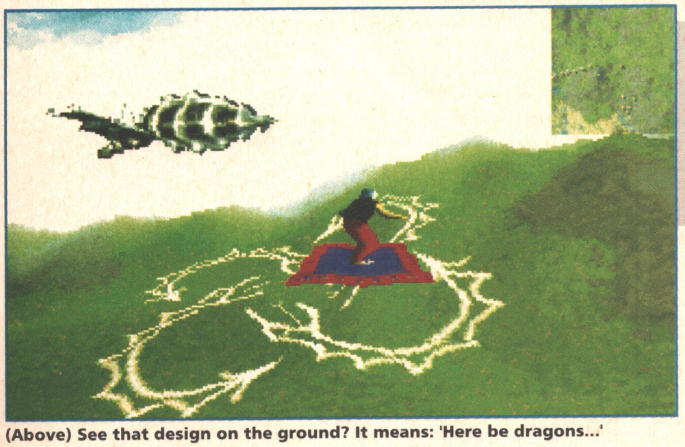
(Above) Atop you're magic carpet you approach a city. Here you can talk to the populous... er... populace to find clues to secret treasure and barter at the local traders for essential items.

(Left) Those strange-looking flying creatures are actually on your side - follow them and they'll lead you to your next quest.

no point having a detailed world unless things work properly within it."

Unusually for Bullfrog, it was the stunning 3D routines that inspired the game idea rather than the other way around. "Glenn Corpes [one of Bullfrog's head programmers] wrote this program that built a landscape you could fly around," explains Peter. "But the problem was why the hell were you flying around it? You couldn't make a flight sim out of it because in a flight sim you're always flying five miles up and you never see the ground at all. And then it suddenly occurred to me it'd be nice to be something to do with a magic carpet.

But wouldn't a futuristic low-level hover skimmer or something similar have worked just as well? "Maybe," says Peter, "but if games are ever to appeal to more than 12-year-olds then you've got to find game subjects that everybody in the family understands. And while everybody knows what a magic carpet is not everybody knows what a 'low-level hover skimmer' is."



(Above) See that design on the ground? It means: 'Here be dragons...'

(Above right) Magic Carpet's landscapes are full of exotic constructions like this circle of standing stones shown here. If you're *really* nifty at the controls you can fly through that stone archway...

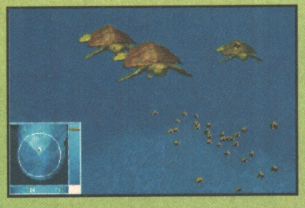
"Modern games are so detailed graphically, but there's no point having a detailed world unless things work properly within it."
PETER MOLYNEUX, Bullfrog

On your travels you'll need to talk to the people wandering around to get clues as to the location of special items or creatures. According to Peter: "We've been working on this phononym generator so that when you talk to people they'll actually speak back to you rather than having a load of text appearing on-screen, which is something I hate in games as it breaks the atmosphere."

Talking of sound and such like, one thing that is surprising it that, even at this early stage, the game already has sound effects and Arabic-style music put into it. "I think that's really important," claims Peter. "Music's one of the first things we put into all our games. If you don't put it in from the start it gets left as a sort of 'afterthought' and the results are generally awful."

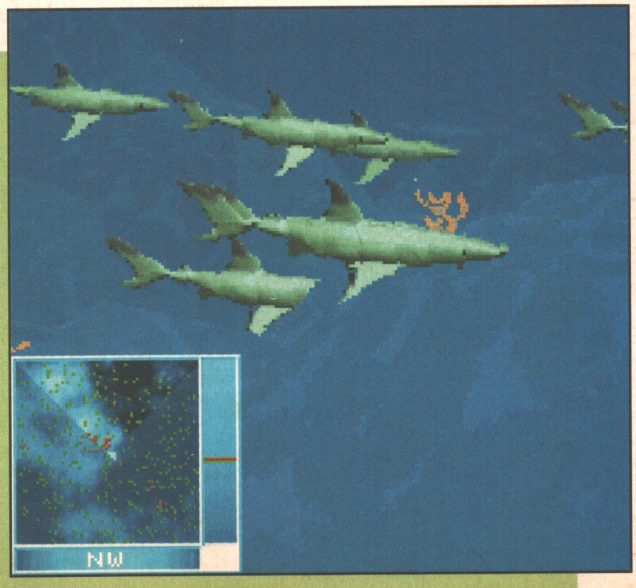
Magic Carpet looks set to take the PC games world by storm when it's released round about late Spring or early Summer. Aladdin eat your heart out.

CREATION



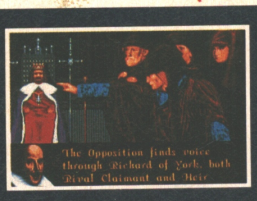
Finally we come to Creation, which isn't due for completion until late '94. Like Magic Carpet, the full game design hasn't been finalised yet but basically the idea here is that you are the commander of an underwater base under attack from various mysterious rivals. Luckily you have schools of weird, genetically-enhanced fish to protect you, which you can guide and order to carry out tasks via brain implants similar to those used to control your agents in Syndicate.

This amazing aquatic world is generated using 3D techniques similar to those in Magic Carpet, including animated texture maps to simulate light rippling on the sea bed. It all sounds a bit like seaQuest DSV - but good, one hopes.



PLAGUES bloody ANARCHY fear EXECUTION

THE MOST ENJOYABLE STRATEGY GAME YOU WILL EVER PLAY



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Screen shots are only intended to be illustrative of the gameplay and not the screen graphics which may vary considerably between different formats in quality and appearance and are subject to the computer's specifications.

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ARE YOU A

PROJECT: ULTIMA VII: PAGAN

DEVELOPERS: ORIGIN

RELEASE: MID-JANUARY 1994

Origin's Ultima series has now been through more transformations than Doctor Who and just as Tom Baker mutated into Peter Davison, so Ultima VII has hung up its long scarf, packed away its overcoat and become a celery-wearing Ultima VIII. Dean Evans takes a pre-launch peek....

An immense red hand reaches through a mystic pentagram and the huge clenched fist slowly unfolds to reveal the tiny form of the Avatar. "You've been a thorn in my side for far too long..." booms the Guardian before casually tipping his hand and letting the Avatar plunge headlong into the godless world of Pagan. Thus begins the eighth Ultima chapter, the latest and arguably the best-looking Ultima game to spring from the creative loins of Richard 'Lord British' Garriott.

If you struggled to the end of the Serpent Isle, you'll no doubt have smiled briefly in triumph before watching the Avatar get dragged through the realities by a huge red hand. Ultima VIII (U8) continues your battle against the power of the Guardian, an enemy who's not a pretentious daily newspaper for Lefty school-teachers but an evil, all-powerful entity with bad teeth and an attitude to match.

U8 takes place in Pagan, a harsh and broken land full to the brim with the usual collection of dodgy barkeeps, unfriendly magicians and wandering monsters. As the Avatar you must defeat the four elementals, escape the Guardian and free the world of Pagan. Can you unlock the secrets of the titans and discover an unidentified fifth source of magic? Is magic itself the key? Who holds the true answer? All these questions and more need to be answered before you can free yourself from banishment and confront the Guardian. As days go this is going to be a tough one.

Like the previous Ultima outings, U8 boasts a brand-new game engine with more tweaks and improvements than your local branch of B&Q. For starters, you'll notice that the viewpoint has shifted considerably. The Avatar himself has increased in size by about 30% and the isometric perspective has decreased in relation to the ground. What all this means is that in U8 there is more to see and all of the objects are drawn in much sharper detail. This detail also extends to world physics because in U8 thrown objects travel in true trajectories. Drop a marble off a building, for instance, and see it bounce and even roll away! Cor! Of course, quite why you'd want to drop a marble from a building is another matter...

In fact, U8's 'big' visuals don't just look stunning, there have also been major improvements in speed and variety of movement. The Avatar moves like never before - running, jumping, climbing, hacking, falling over... you name it, the Avatar does it. Each character has over 400 frames of animation and the Avatar boasts over 1,200 frames (he was drawn with a mere 32 in Ultima 7).

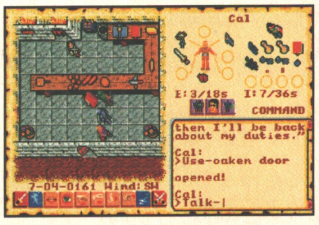
Of course all this attention to detail means that different characters can

COME IN NO. 7 - YOUR TIME IS UP!

The Ultima team pride themselves on using a new technology in each incarnation and U8 is no exception. If you don't know anything of the earlier games, here's the story so far...

ULTIMA V

The acquisition of the Codex Of Ultimate Wisdom resulted in a kharmic imbalance and the rise of three evil shadowlords from the black jewel of Mondain. Er, yeah. Anyway, in glorious 2D you had to restore peace and harmony and reclaim your throne.



ULTIMA VI

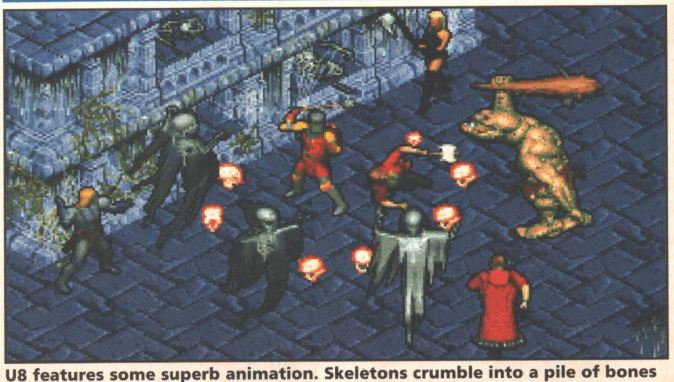
Once again the poor old land of Britannia is under threat and this time the Avatar must uncover the secret of the Gargoyles. Ultima VI began the gradual move towards an isometric 3D viewpoint and featured much more interaction and visual colour.

ULTIMA VII

Britannia faced with evil? I can't believe it! Ultima VII continued the improvements seen in Ultima VI. In The Black Gate and the follow-up The Serpent Isle, the Avatar deals with Britannia intrigue before confronting the Guardian himself.

ULTIMA VIII

Ladies and Gentlemen please put your hands together for Ultima VIII. Garriot's new baby features an even better 3D landscape and superb animation. In Ultimas IX and X the viewpoint should eventually become first-person perspec-



U8 features some superb animation. Skeletons crumble into a pile of bones and reform minutes later and zombies limp. It's just like those old Ray Harryhausen special effects in Clash of the Titans.

PAGAN?

now act and move in different ways. The Avatar, for example, stands tall and strides everywhere with an air of macho purpose, while zombies limp and floating eyeballs do whatever it is that floating eyeballs do. Unfortunately the attention to detail has also meant that there's no room for your band of faithful companions. In Pagan you're on your own, there's no Iolo, Shamino or Dupre to aid you.

If you're an Ultima fan, you'll find that U8 has changed quite significantly. Apart from the traditional new visual approach (see the All Change! panel), Garriott and his team have tried to make U8 much less complicated and more accessible to a wider audience. And as a result of this close attention to detail and animation, U8 is a much smaller game, only 25% as large as the previous Ultima extravaganzas.

But before all you Britannia veterans leap out of your comfy chairs to protest at these sweeping changes, let me assure you that U8 is not going to be easy. It will be as complex and as difficult as ever. Origin are hoping that with the combination of large, cartoon-like animation, arcade-style combat and an involved plot, U8 will be the title that will shift the series away from cult status and into the mainstream.

As part of this repositioning, turn-based combat (introduced in Ultima 7) have been dropped and replaced with stunningly lifelike, real-time battles. Thankfully this is only a gentle move towards arcade action and U8 still retains all the non-player characters and the important realistic world feel. It may not have as many stats as the previous games, but it's much easier to use and the plot is much more complex and involved.

U8 will also be the first Ultima game to include cinematic sequences and, like Privateer, there will be an additional speech pack available to expand the brief digitised speech in the game. In fact, the sound and music are highly impressive. U8 features an eerie soundtrack, punctuated by a very atmospheric, almost monastic sighing that goes "Ahhhh-ha... ahhhh-ha... ah-haa", etc.

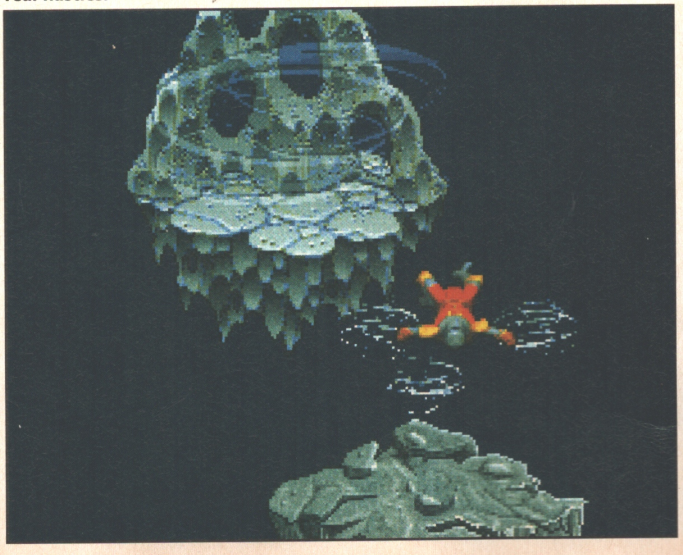
Now I've never been a great Ultima fan. If people want to trek for three hours across a desert seeking the magic candle of Old Ashor then, hey, that's fine with me. It's just not my idea of a good time. But now I've seen U8, my view has changed. Because once you get in there, hacking away at floating eyeballs, running away from angry townsfolk and walking along steep clifftops, you begin to realise that U8 is more than just a fantasy game, it's a way of life (groan - Ed). It's a game that looks, feels and even smells superb. Personally, I can't wait to have another bash.

Ultima VIII: Pagan will come on around 8 disks and require a paltry 30Mb of your hard disk space. Of course you're going to need a fast machine, about 4Mb of RAM and if you have a MIDI compatible sound card it's a definite plus. And then there's the speech pack, that will cost you extra. Bloody Origin.

(Above) Oh that's good timing - you've arrived just at the moment to see a beheading!

(Below) The Avatar gets in a whirl with one of the more ethereal nasties.

"Ultima VIII is more than just a fantasy game, it's a way of life. It's a game that looks, feels and even smells superb."



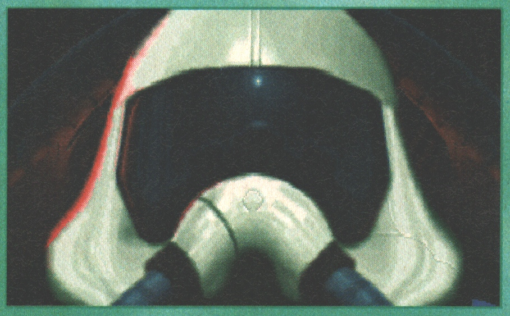
DIAL 01 FOR DEMONS

The mage woman believes that someone is going to attack the village sorcerer and so she conjures a mighty demon to smite the would-be assassin...

..Her good intentions aren't rewarded as the sorcerer turns up complaining she has killed off a vital disciple. Luckily you can fill the gap in the ritual calling Pyros, God of Fire.

UNDER WATER • UNDER PR

McKinley Mining Corp
Confidential



Name:James A. Witney
Call Sign:JAWS
Age:26
Payroll Number:KP8843321XR
Rank:Captain Pilot(Class 2)

Special Skills:
Stealth/Covert Operations

Current Status:Active
Health:A1

Previous Contracts:
Antarctic Base HR - 67 days
South Atlantic QJ - 48 days

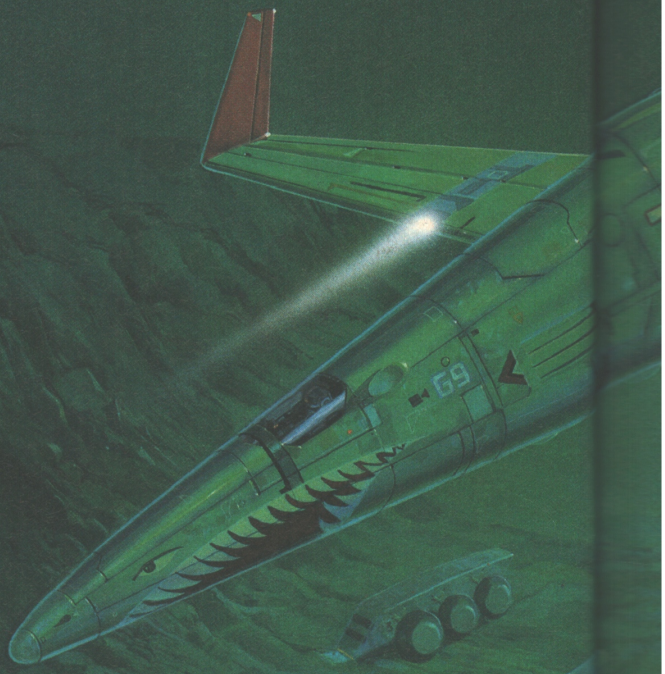
Current Contract:
North Sector 10 - Sea of Japan
Rate:$ 5000 per day

Operational Area:
124320 x 122877

Current Mission:

Lead the X3 team of unmarked Tornado Class subs from Carrier Dauntless on stealth patrol and reconnaissance of border territory between McKinley 205 and GomPol 555.

SUB
20



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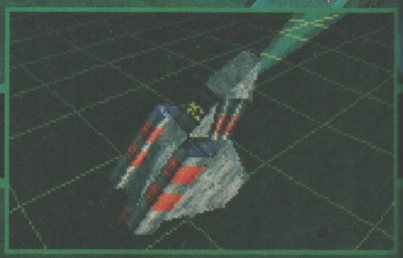

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BWAR 50

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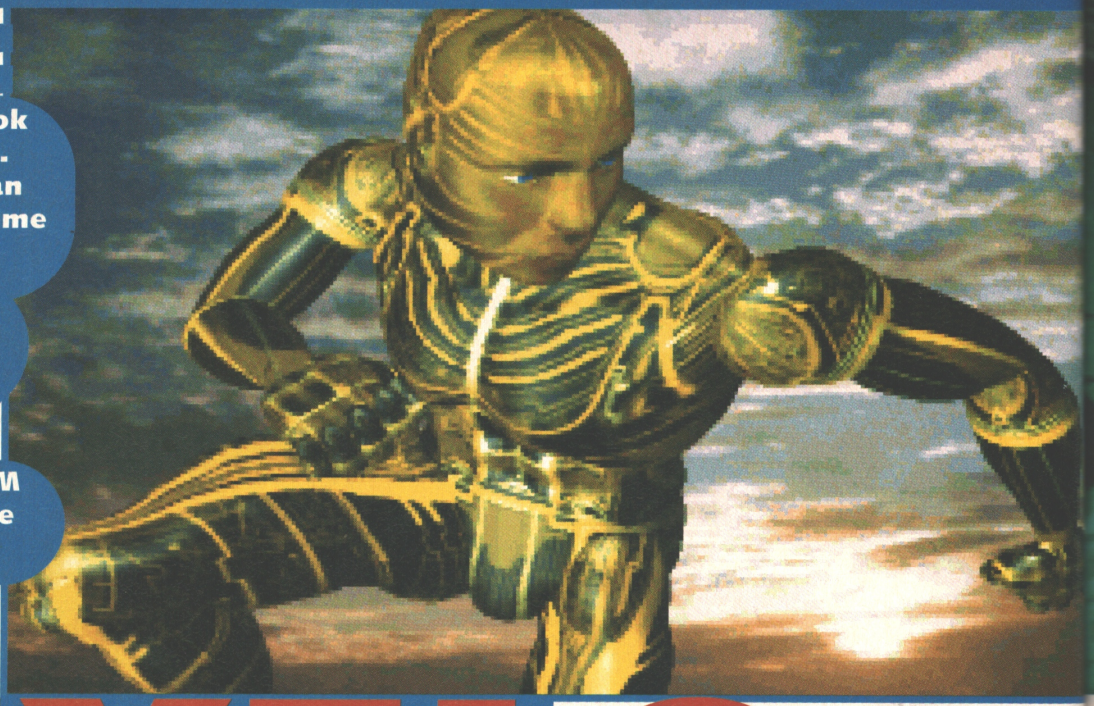
MICROPROSE

PROJECT: THE LAWNMOWER MAN

DEVELOPERS: THE SALES CURVE

RELEASE: EARLY 1994

From a gripping book came a tedious film. Peter Fletcher, a man who spends more time in his own private little world than the real one, seemed the ideal choice to ask The Sales Curve which medium their forthcoming CD-ROM incarnation will take after.



PIXELS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE GARDEN

Has anyone actually tried Virtual Reality? If so, and believe me it's not something you should be proud of, then can you tell me what possible bearing sitting in a crude polygon-built cockpit, slowly panning your head from left to right while suffering the time delay of the computer trying to catch up with you and shooting a couple of other badly-controlled planes has to do with the scenes of stunning arcade action seen in the otherwise ordinary film The Lawnmower Man? About as much as the VR in Wild Palms does, I suspect.

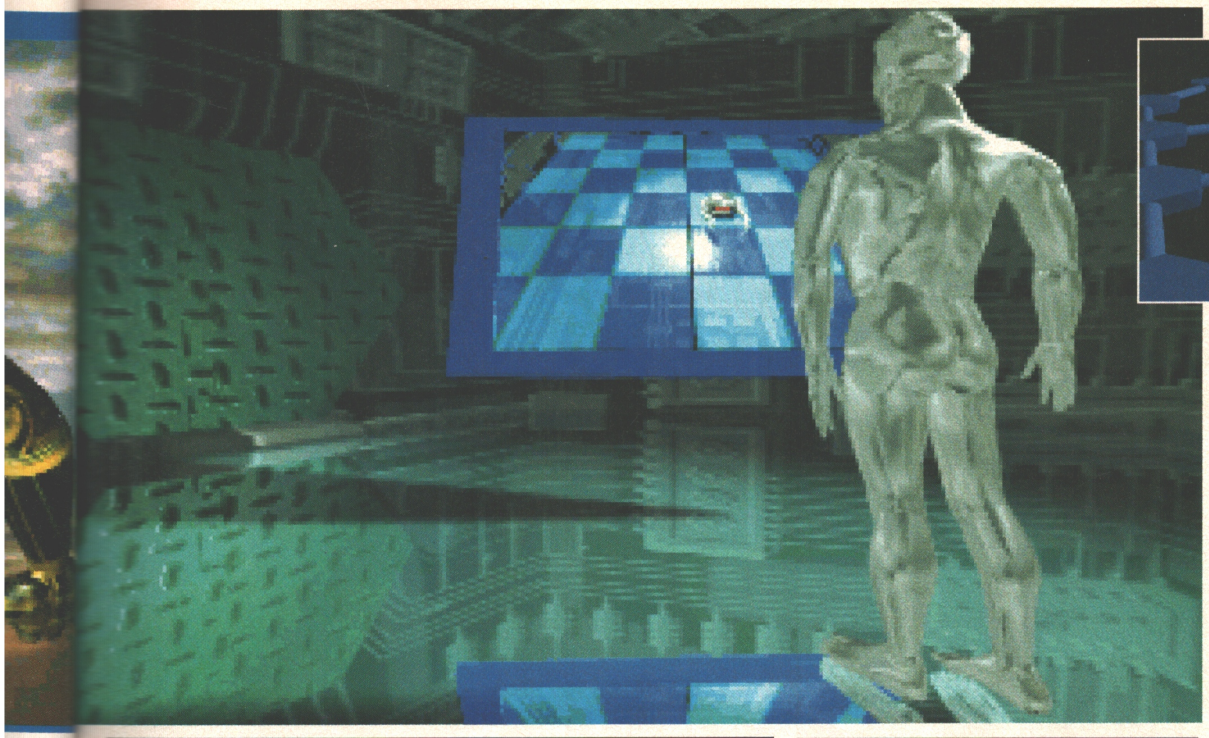
While VR in the real world still remains incredibly basic, Hollywood continues to persist in presenting it to us as fantastic landscapes of total immersion escapism run by technology more advanced than pop-up toasters that don't burn your bread and get it stuck in the heating bits, breaking the pop-up mechanism and defeating its purpose.

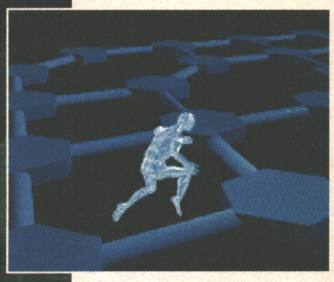
Somewhat unsurprisingly then, a crude polygon-built VR version of the game of the film of the book isn't on the cards. A CD-ROM version is, though, and as you can no doubt tell from the pictures our hard-working design staff have so kindly arranged on these pages for me, it looks stunning. Simply ravishing in an EstÇe Lauder, Paris Fashion Show sort of a way. My word does it look good. Jolly good. Jolly, johlly, jawly, jollee good.

"You're stalling aren't you," is a question no doubt forming on your lips. "You're about to tell us that it's all graphics and no game aren't you?" Don't be silly. You and I both know that I'd never resort to such unimaginative cliche - it'd be insulting. If I was going to say something like that I'd put it more like "A game of no uncertain graphical ability but very uncertain gaming content", as befits my style. Thankfully I don't need to use either of the ghastly phrases as The Lawnmower Man looks like being simply stunning in just about every department, from graphics to gameplay to gardening.

It smacks of The 7th Guest when it

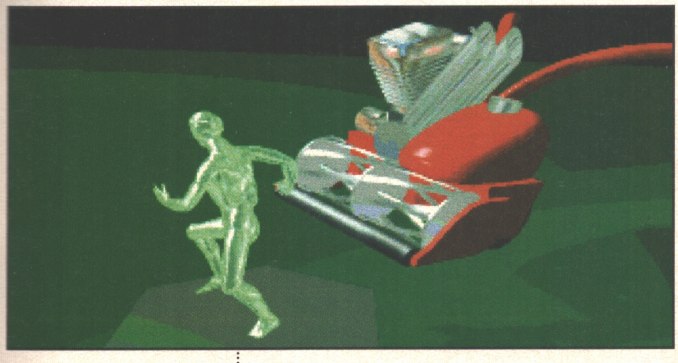
Heeerree'ss Joby. No, this isn't a pic from the film, or rather it is but it's taken from the game. The computer graphics and animation files that were used in the movie version of The Lawnmower Man are exactly the same ones that The Sales Curve used for the game.

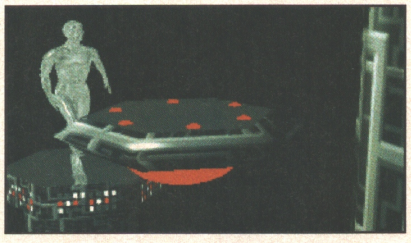




(Above) Remember The Adventure Game? If so then you can hardly fail to recall the sheer splendicity that was the Vortex. Now you get the chance to pit your wits against the invisible foe.

(Left below) As with any film/game dealing with technology there's a small and cute robot to be found. Angelo has to guide this mini-droid across a pit-laden floor in order to retrieve a key. Should he fail a rather angry looking lawnmower (in so much as it is possible for a lawnmower to look angry) slices the Doc to pieces.





(Left) Platform games arrive in virtual reality. The full version of the game delights in turning the simplest of actions into visual feasts. Most people will look at these pictures and think they're from between-game animations or intro sequences but no - every part of the game looks as good as this!

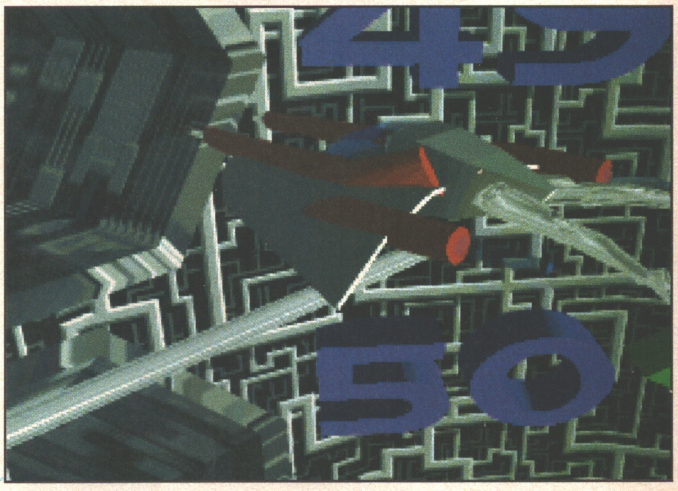
comes to gameplay, although the balance of puzzles to action is more heavily weighted in the direction of the latter. A section entitled Cyberboogie (a phrase I am certain was only made up to give us journalists, who now have to write the damned thing into every feature we do on the game, something to snigger about. How many times do you get to use the word 'boogie' in an average everyday conversation about Tomato Sauce for example?) has the player running along a beautifully-rendered, if you will, 'cyber-highway', jumping, dodging and collecting all manner of cyberly-created (if that's the right phrase) objects. Other sections, such as the various logic gates and the Vortex (a game that will be instantly familiar to any erstwhile viewers of BBC2's much-missed The Adventure Game series) require the cerebral functions of your mind to negotiate.

Thankfully The Sales Curve, upon whose broad and hefty shoulders the burden of such a monumental film conversion has fallen, has decided to dispense with the majority of the film's plot and instead takes us on a trip into Hollywood-style VR landscapes.

"The Lawnmower Man looks like being simply stunning in just about every department, from graphics to gameplay to gardening."

The basic elements of the plot remain: Jobe, a slightly retarded gardener, gets a massive brain boost from Dr Angelo's Virtual Reality experiments, eventually becoming a superhuman figure, invading the world's computer networks and effectively taking over control of the planet. Pulling Dr Angelo, his girlfriend Carla and her son Peter into the VR world, Cyberjobe, as he now is, imprisons the two loved ones and sets the good doctor a series of fiendish tests (the various levels of the game) in order to free them.

Throughout the game, usually between the levels, you are treated to digitised footage from the film, in the



One of the most impressive parts of the film was the Cyberplane game that Jobe played against Peter before he became superhuman. That game is recreated for you here and appears quite a few times throughout Dr Angelo's epic quest to save the world.

One of the simpler games on offer is a version of Simon. In order to get past certain barriers, Dr Angelo has to repeat a lengthy musical score played by Cyberjobe. At first it was just going to be an audio track but the developers discovered it was too hard for anyone other than a professional musician so they added colour guides as well.

This is how Dr Angelo appears throughout the game (except for the digitised film segments). Similar effects to those seen in Terminator 2 are used for when he 'morphs' into other shapes, relevant to the present situation.

form of Jobe's memory banks reminding him of who he once was. In order to get the picture quality as sharp as possible the footage was taken from Laserdisc versions of the film, grabbed and converted from a Pioneer Laserdisc Player.

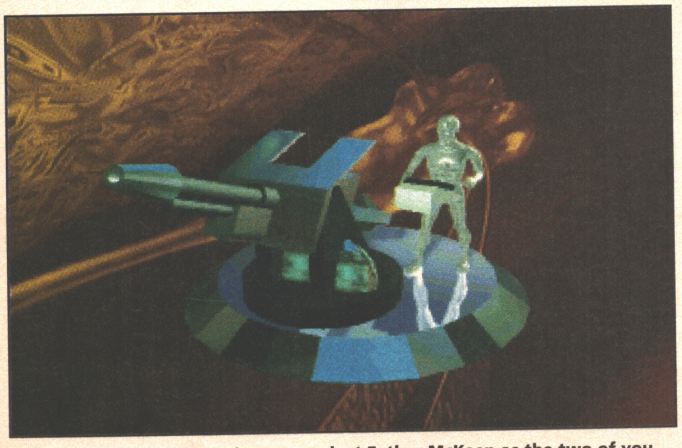
Apart from film footage the actual computer-generated animations used for Cyberjobe in the film were given to The Sales Curve for use in the game. Whenever you see Jobe ranting and raving on your screen you can be safe in the knowledge that it's exactly the same one you saw at your local Multiplex Cinema many moons ago.

If comment is going to be passed on the game, I would hazard a guess that it will be directed towards the content. Although there's a lot to see and do, when you come down to brass tacks there isn't all that much to actually do (if you follow me). When running along the cyberhighway for example, you don't have full directional control over Angelo, you instead direct his actions at the correct moments. Veterans of those old Laserdisc arcade games such as Dragon's Lair and Super Don Quixote (or SUPERRR DAWNN KEE-HOUGH-TAAYYYY! as it insisted on screaming at me whenever I approached it with a fifty-pence piece) should instantly, or as instantly as their aging brains will allow, know what I refer to.

The whole problem with CD-ROM games at the moment is that you are restricted as to what you can do by the speed of your player. By way of example, 150K/second drives are actually so slow that just to play the games in The Lawnmower Man with any satisfactory sense of speed, the graphics have had to be reduced to just 16-colour VGA. Since this was the initial speed of the drives released and a number of people still own them, The Sales Curve are releasing a separate 150K/second version to accommodate them while owners of 300K/second CD-ROM drives and above will get the full 256-colour treatment.

There was talk of Atari's new Jaguar machine supporting a quad-drive (600K/second speed) which would do wonders for gameplay but no one knows for sure if this will happen. Until then we're getting mind-blowing graphics and steadily-increasing gameplay. With the possible exception of LucasArts' Rebel Assault (see page 58 for a review) The Lawnmower Man is the greatest example of CD gaming so far. Of course with around three months of development work still to be done, who knows what might sneak in when everyone's back is turned, waiting to jump out and say "Surprise, look at what I can do" when we turn around?

The bees are a nasty foe. Angelo's aim is to guide them through a maze towards the deadly rotating fans, allowing him safe access to the other side. One wrong turn and it's time to apply the cybervaseline to the cyberwelts from the cyberstings.



The Cybercannon pits you against Father McKeen as the two of you attempt to fire a cybercannonball through a cyberhole in an invisible cyberwall (I think I'll dispense with the cyber-prefixes from now on). Every time you hit the wall you are briefly shown the position of the hole and it's up to you to adjust your aim accordingly.

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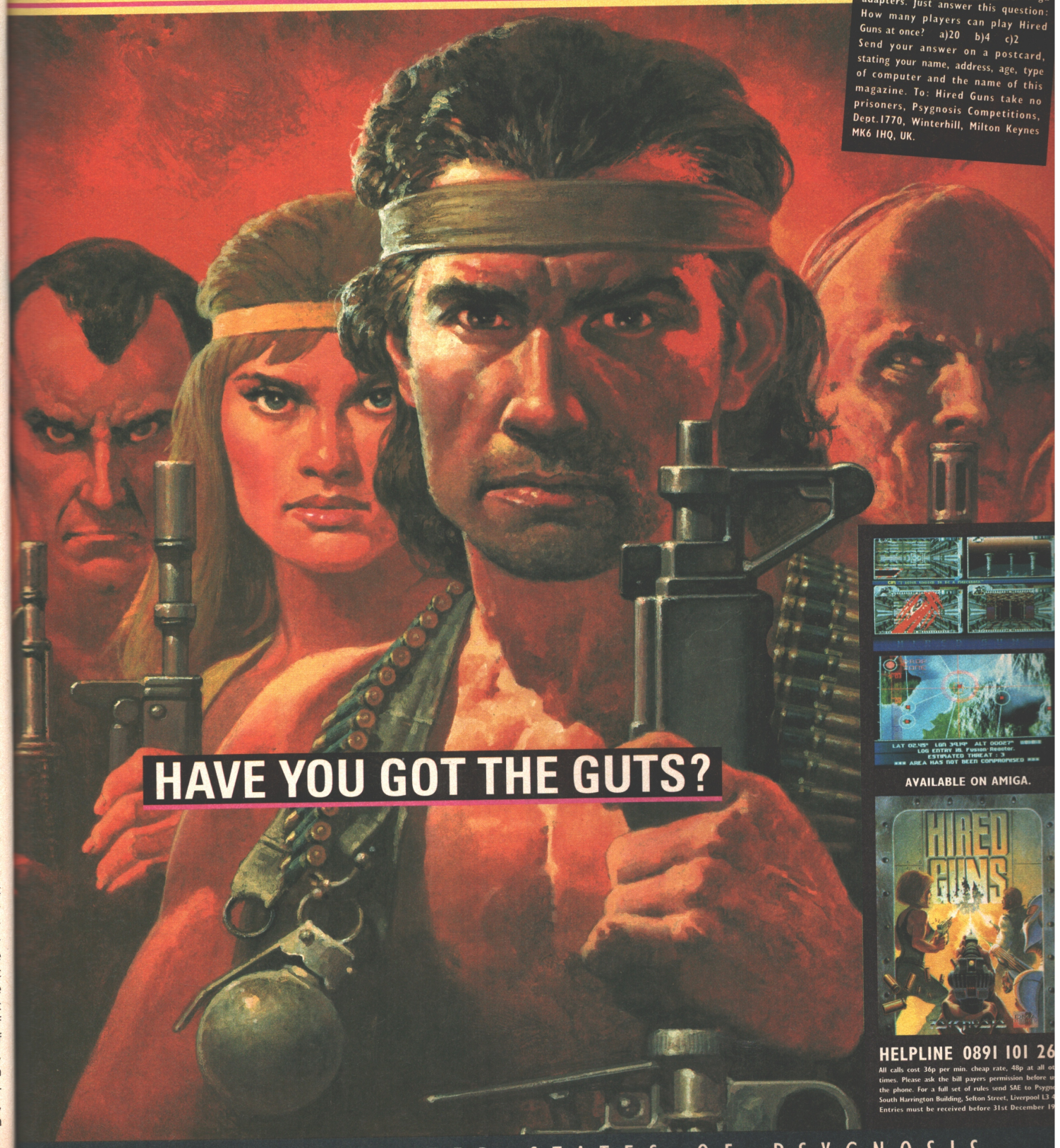

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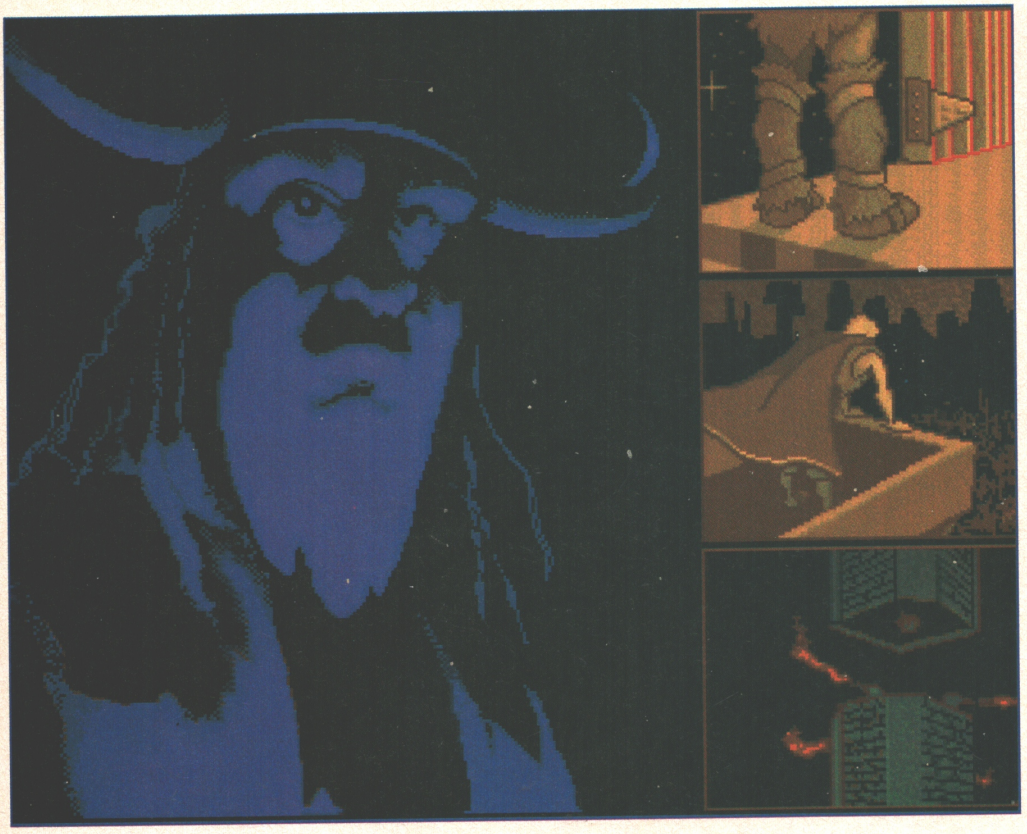
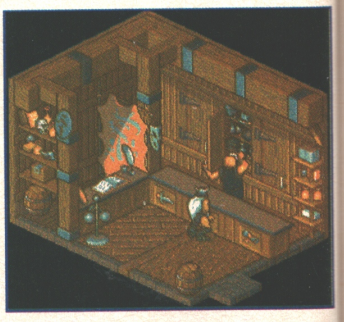
FROM THE UNITED STATES OF PSYGNOSIS

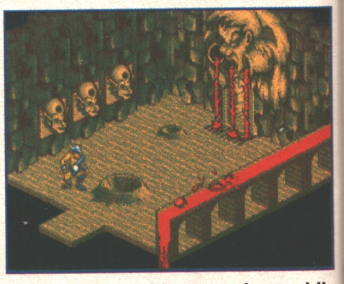
NORSE-Y

PROJECT: HEIMDALL 2
DEVELOPERS: THE 8TH DAY
RELEASE: EASTER 1994

If you liked Heimdall you'll be pleasantly suprised to discover that its sequel is shaping up to bigger and better in just about every department. Simon Byron explains all...







(Top) You'll be able to purchase additional supplies and weapons from the friendly shopkeeper.

(Above) Most of the backgrounds in Heimdall 2 will contain some form of animation, like this bubbling river of blood. Nice.

(Left) A few shots from the game's moody intro.

Core aren't exactly the most prolific PC publishers, mainly because they believe that many of their games aren't ideally suited to the format, but one of the most memorable adventures over recent years was Heimdall, the isometric-3D role-playing extravaganza created by the 8th Day, AKA programmer Ged Keaveney and graphic artist Jerr O'Carroll.

Now Heimdall is back in the imaginatively-entitled Heimdall 2, in which Loki, the evil Norse god, is up to his no-good tricks again. After many have tried and failed to defeat him, the gods send that old warhorse Heimdall to deal with him once more, this time with a female companion in tow by the name of Ursha.

As is the case with the majority of big-name games, a sequel was virtually assured even before the original was finished, boxed and out the door. But Heimdall 2 has been afforded much more care and attention than most, mainly because Ged and Jerr weren't too pleased with the first game. "At the time we were really happy but when you sit back and take a good look at it then you can see areas which could have been improved," Ged admits.

> **"This game is very different - we didn't just want to rehash the graphics and call it a sequel. That would be a real cop-out."**
>
> **GEDD KEAVENEY,** Heimdall 2's co-creator

"Before we started work on Heimdall 2 we took a long, hard look at the first one," Ged continues, "so that we could improve upon everything in the original. We noticed several important things: there were vast amounts of space with not a lot going on, all the baddies were static and you couldn't interact with them or any other in-game characters. These have all been rectified now.

"We've redesigned virtually everything in the game so that you don't have to keep switching screens to select something from another menu. There's the standard spell-casting system, like in most RPGs, where you can mix up potions, but the difference here is that you do this while the game is still going on. Once you've mixed up a hex you can store it for use later on in the game.

"The inventory now works in much the same way. You can store things or hand them over to other characters with very little fuss. We've also included quantities - in the original, if you had two or more food rations then they'd occupy two separate 'slots' in your inventory. Now you can have loads of rations stored in the same 'slot', meaning you can carry much more. We've tried to make it much more user-friendly.

"As you can see, we've really picked the first game apart, but it's good to learn from your mistakes."

The duo are quick to point out many of the original's shortcomings and are brutally harsh throughout. One of their main grievances is the

but nice

sparseness of the landscape. "The level maps in Heimdall had no raised walkways and were mainly square shaped. Visually, the game was dull. Looking back on it now we can see that there was a lot of room for improvement," admits Ged.

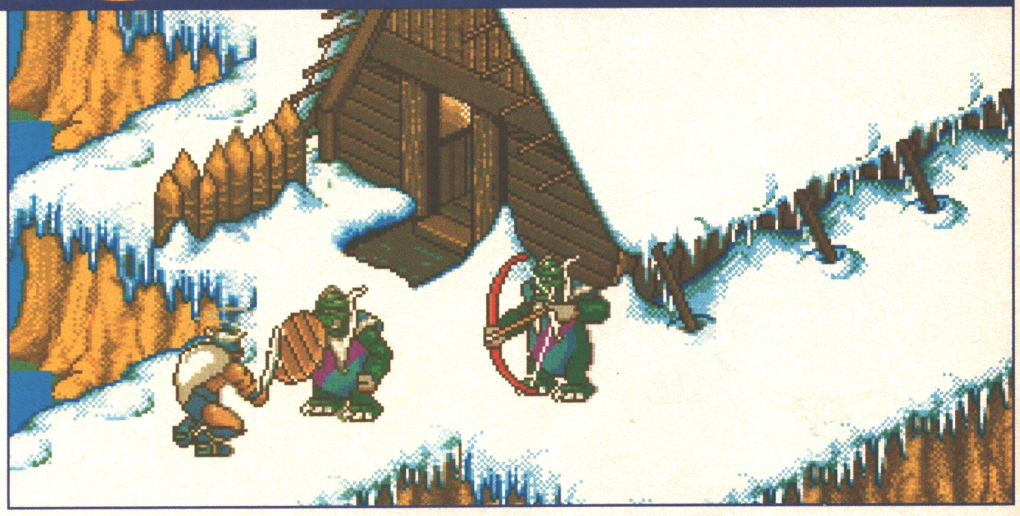
Other differences are not so easy to spot. Object manipulation is handled a lot differently, as Jerr explains: "If you dropped an item in the original game then you'd lose it - it was pretty limiting, really. Now, if you try and dispose of an object which is necessary to finish the game then it will reappear somewhere else in the game world.

"For example, if you attempt to chuck a scroll off the side of a cliff then the computer will allocate it to another character, as if he's collected it from the bottom of the cliff. If you want that item back then you'll have to slay the character who picked it up. You'll never find yourself completely stuck through utter carelessness - you'll just make the game slightly harder.

"Heimdall 2's game world is a finely-balanced thing. Baddies will never reappear once you've killed them (although you will come across generators in some cases which produce more meanies, so the game never feels too empty), and there's a finite number of objects - if you drop a piece of treasure and a thief comes along and nicks it while your back's turned then when you kill that particular character you'll be able to reclaim your treasure. It's far more realistic, really."

Another thing the team point out is that all the important objects within the original game were placed against the back wall of its location. I wouldn't have noticed it; you wouldn't have noticed it - but you won't find that kind of thing in Heimdall 2.

Throughout the game, characters will appear and ask you to perform various mini quests.



(Above) Here's a good example of the on-screen combat. Rather than jumping to a separate screen and fiddling with a load of icons (like you had to in the original game), you'll need to employ some nifty arcade skills if you want to avoid ending up in a bloddy heap.

"We've got a proper 'walk behind' system now," offers Jerr, "The way the first game worked made it look a bit empty, now Heimdall can move behind almost any object. This means that we can create more varied and interesting rooms for him to explore, without being hindered by as many restrictions."

All the PC coding is being handled by Dave Keogh who's had experience in every aspect of programming - apart from writing games! But, in his own immortal words: "The original Heimdall was Gedd's first game, and look how well that turned out."

Although the PC version is lagging slightly behind the Amiga version (don't worry, though - both will be released simultaneously), Dave can't learn much from Gedd's troubleshooting. "I've had to deal with a whole host of different problems," he remarks, "most of which are mainly due to the fact that I'm working with more colours but less base memory.

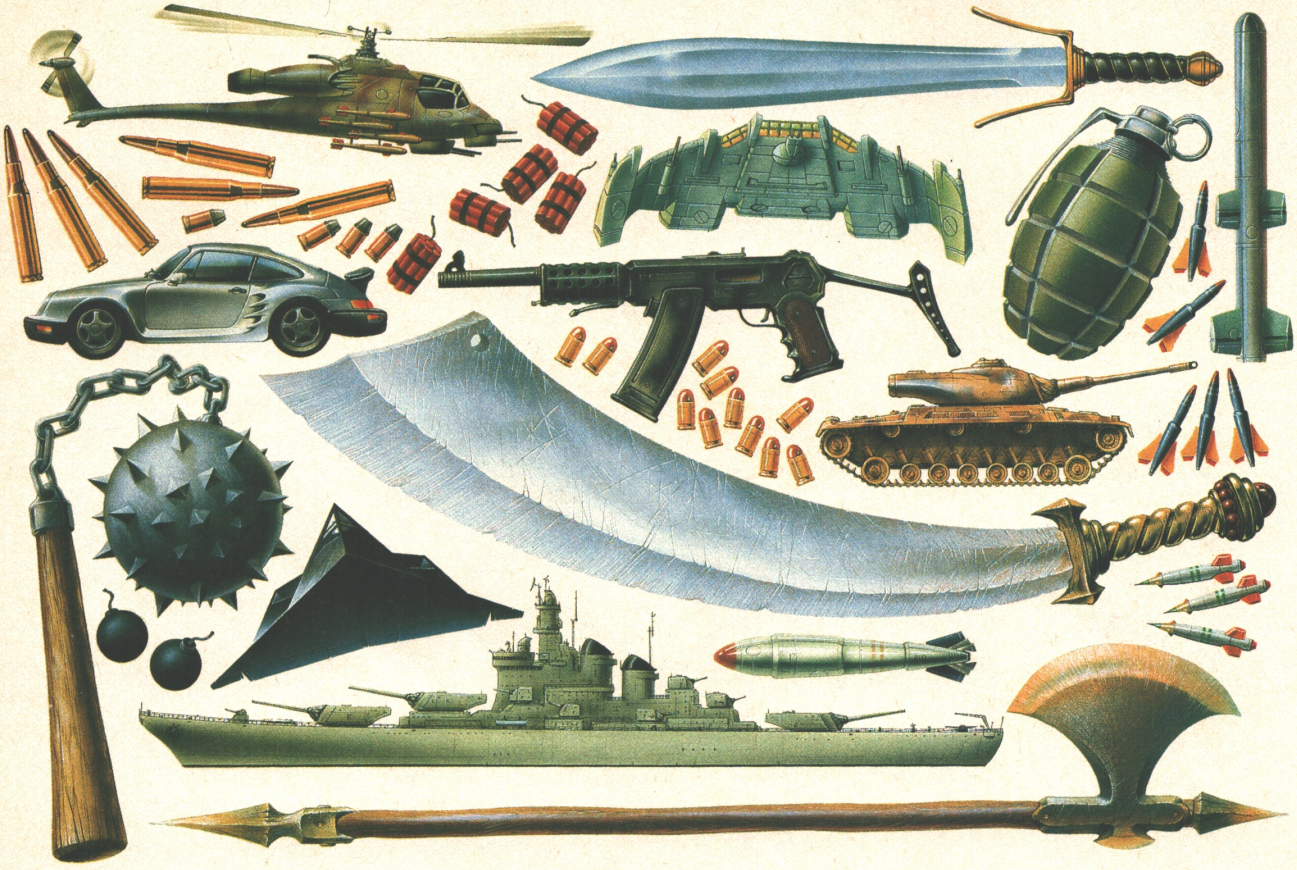
"I've used a technique whereby the display is split into to distinct areas, one for the main game and one for the options menu, I've had to create two cursors which are currently flickering when you try to access the menu bar. It's not too bad at the moment but I've got to find a way of getting rid of it."

What's obvious about the team's enthusiasm is that they really believe in what they're doing. As the curtain falls and we say our goodbyes, it seems only fair to hand over to Ged for the last time. "This game is very different - we didn't just want to rehash the graphics and call it a sequel. That would be a real cop-out. In fact, nothing in Heimdall 2 has been re-used from the first game. We're writing this because we enjoy it - if we felt we were short-changing anyone then we wouldn't do it."

(Above) Heimdall begins his quest in the Hall of Worlds where each door is an entrance to different lands containing fresh puzzles and challenges.

(Below) The team wouldn't reveal what happens in this room. Scary, eh?

AGAINST ALL ODDS



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1994 NOW!

1994 stretches before us like a vast unmapped road, full of mystery and surprise with no-one quite knowing what lies around the next corner. Except as far as games on the PC go, in which case you'll soon all be fully clued up. You see, Ciaràn Brennan has spent literally minutes phoning up all the software companies finding out what they're up to over the next twelve months, and here are the results of his exhaustive (and exhausting) research - an, if you will, Ordnance Survey Map of the games currently planned for release over the coming year. So strap yourself in tightly, adjust the mirror, signal clearly and then manouevre yourself out into the fast lane 'cos here comes 1994... NOW!

ALONE IN THE DARK 2

JANUARY

ALONE IN THE DARK 2

From: Infogrames
Format: Disk
More nail-biting, heart-stopping, breath-taking arcade action/adventure in the sequel to what will probably go down as the most critically-acclaimed release of this year - at least, it will if the original was anything to go by. The same distinctive polygon-based graphic style will feature this time around, albeit with improved colours and animation techniques promised. Further enhancements are promised in the gameplay and environment size departments. Definitely one to look out for. A CD-ROM version is expected to follow in February.

BLOODNET

AIR FORCE COMMANDER

From: Impressions
Format: Disk
Not a flight simulation, more a re-creation of one of those flight operations rooms that feature in war films, where girls push model aircraft around maps of the world. A 'resource management' game featuring 56 scenarios - half each from the Gulf and WWII.

AIRLINE COMBAT

From: Interactivision
Format: Disk
Also known as Airlines, this one hopes to become to the airline business what Railroad Tycoon was to the train set. A CD-ROM version is expected to follow in February.

BLOODNET

From: MicroProse
Format: CD-ROM
The unusual mix of gothic, cyberpunk and vampire action is promised by this latest work from the remnants of the Paragon team (previously responsible for Twilight 2000 and Megatraveller amongst others).

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER '94

From: Domark
Format: CD-ROM
Deep, detailed and so addictive that it should have been smuggled into the country in swallowed condoms, Championship Manager '93 had everything going for it - except that, having been programmed before the end of the 92/93 season, it lacked a little something in the accuracy stakes.

The data disk released at the end of 1993 took care of that little problem, and here it is again, wrapped up with the original program and spiced up with the added advantage of Windows compatibility. Should keep football fanatics amused until next season rolls around. 'Ere we go, 'ere we go, 'ere we go - as they say on the terraces.

CYBERSPACE

CONSPIRACY

From: Virgin
Format: CD-ROM
Murder, mystery and suspense abound within the walls of the Kremlin in this enhanced and upgraded CD version of a recent Virgin graphic adventure. This one even has shades of Hollywood, as 70's heartthrob Donald Sutherland (father of Kiefer) will make his computer game debut in digitised form as the player's dead father. The first of many offerings for '94 from the French development team Cryo (Dune).

CYBERSPACE

From: Empire
Format: Disk
A dark, gritty RPG set in a futuristic world as envisaged by cyberpunk creator William Gibson. The first 3D RPG from the O.D.E. team (previously responsible for Team Yankee, War in the Gulf and Pacific Islands).

DETROIT

From: Impressions
Format: Disk
Computers can allow you to become anything really: first a railway magnate, then an airline mogul and now, with the help of Impressions' Detroit, an automobile baron. Yet another 'business sim', this one set in America's famous 'Motown'.

F1

From: Domark
Format: Disk
An arcade-style motor racing game which ignores simulation-style accuracy in favour of as much 'behind the wheel' action as possible. Endorsed by FIA

(the Formula One Association), this will be the only game to feature all cars, drivers and circuits from the real-life Grand Prix tour.

F-14 FLEET DEFENDER

From: MicroProse
Format: Disk
After a torrid 1993, MicroProse prepares to return to its gaming roots with this, its first accurate flight simulation since F117A. Not only is this the first simulation to attempt to reproduce the F-14's particular style, MicroProse also hopes that it will give Spectrum Holobyte's Falcon 3.0 a run for its money as the most definitive simulation available.

HORNET: NAVAL STRIKE FIGHTER

From: MicroProse
Format: Disk
And speaking of Falcon 3.0, this data disk will allow its users to take to the skies in an F/A-18 Hornet, an aircraft renowned for its acceleration and turning power.

FANTASTIC DIZZY

From: Code Masters
Format: Disk
Code Masters' egg-shaped cutesy hero moves up from the budget stakes for his first full-price release on PC. This one has already enjoyed considerable success on Sega's Mega Drive console.

FLIGHT SIM TOOLKIT

From: Domark
Format: CD-ROM
Why bother to fly in someone else's plane when you can fly one of your own? Domark's air-based game creation utility, which has already enjoyed some considerable success on disk, makes its CD debut. If you want to get an idea of what it'll be like, why not play our demo?

FOOTBALL GAME (Working Title)

From: Ascon
Format: Disk
Having studied the quality of the current crop of football management games, the German developers of this new offering will attempt to make their mark by beefing up the presentation - not just in making things easier to play but also, by the introduction of cartoon-style animation sequences, better looking too.

GRAHAM GOOCH WORLD CLASS CRICKET

From: Audiogenic
Format: Disk
England's greatest living batsman may not make it to the West Indies for the winter tour, but the arcade-style game which he has lent his name to will appear on PC just before the first ball is bowled.

JACK THE RIPPER

From: Intergalactic
Format: Disk
Four years in development, in the

capable hands of Ezra Sidran (UMS and UMS II), this adventure will allegedly allow the player to use archive information gleaned from Scotland Yard's own files to help in solving the most infamous murder mystery of them all.

JOURNEYMAN PROJECT

From: GameTek
Format: CD-ROM
GameTek will make its first moves into the world of multimedia gaming with this time-travelling adventure which will allow access to more than 30 minutes of digitised film.

KYRANDIA II - HAND OF FATE

From: Virgin
Format: Disk
The first of the year from Westwood Studios (whose previous credits include Lands of Lore and, of course, Kyrandia), this massive adventure promises graphical and musical improvements over its predecessor.

LANDS OF LORE

From: Virgin
Format: CD-ROM
Did someone mention Lands of Lore? Well here it is again, although this time around Westwood's fantasy RPG offers all of the usual CD enhancements - and even the possibility of a major star's voice-over.

LINKS: KAPALUA COURSE DISK

From: Access
Format: Disk
Digital swingers who prefer the Links style of play will soon be able to practice their chosen sport on one of Hawaii's most beautiful courses.

MEGA RACE

From: Software Toolworks
Format: CD-ROM
Once again from French team Cryo (who look like having a busy year) this futuristic racing game promises to make major strides forwards, in terms of PC graphics at least.

MERCHANT PRINCE

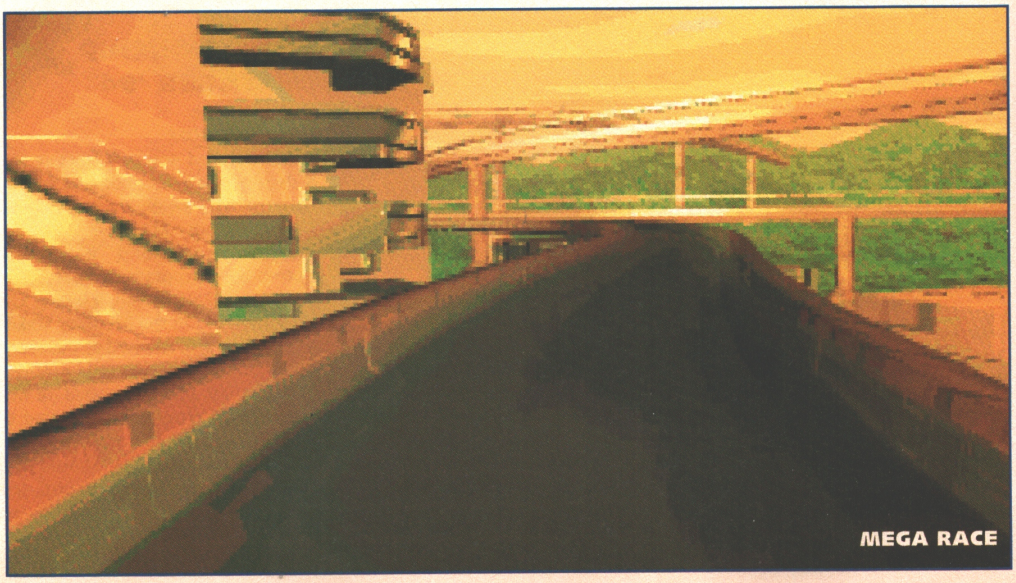
From: QQP
Format: Disk
"Travel through the old world, while gathering lavish adventures" in this adventure from Quantum Quality Products, the New Jersey developer which is beginning to challenge for the SSI crown Stateside.

PACIFIC STRIKE

From: Origin
Format: Disk
Strike Commander goes back in time - right back, in fact, to the Pacific campaign of WWII. Maybe it's because the Yanks can't beat the Japanese in the economic struggle that they keep going back to this old chestnut - whatever the reason though, this promises to offer the a realistic recreation of the first real battle involving naval aircraft.

PACIFIC STRIKE - SPEECH PACK

From: Origin
Format: Disk
And for a few extra quid, you can even hear those pilots talk.


MEGA RACE

POLICE QUEST IV

From: Sierra
Format: CD-ROM
Sequel specialist Sierra On-Line continues its policy of returning to well-known characters and game worlds with this, the fourth instalment in Jim Wall's procedure-friendly American cop adventure series - now on CD.

RED CRYSTAL - THE SEVEN SECRETS OF LIFE

From: QQP
Format: Disk
As the sub-title suggests, your quest will be to seek out the seven secrets of life in this new role-player, which will break new ground in being the first game of this type to feature two-player action.

REUNION

From: Grandslam
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
A Hungarian-produced space strategy game.

RISE OF THE ROBOTS

From: Mirage
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
More column inches have been devoted to Mirage's graphically-stunning beat-'em-up game than to just about anything else of late - with the possible exception of Princess Diana's ill-fated workout. For those of you who have somehow managed to miss this though, ROTR is expected to cause quite a stir if it manages to live up to its goal of being the first game of its kind to merge sprite-based gameplay (that's normal pictures moving around a screen) with photo-realistic rendered graphics (that is, pictures which are calculated by the computer rather than drawn). Early reports suggest that they're well within reach of its goal.

ROBINSON'S RESCUE

From: Silmarils
Format: Disk
Something of a departure for Silmarils, in that

it will make use of Commanche-style graphics - not to illustrate a flight simulation, but to open up a new direction for adventure games. As the name almost suggests, the gameplay will feature a lone space traveller, lost on a forbidding planet.

SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD

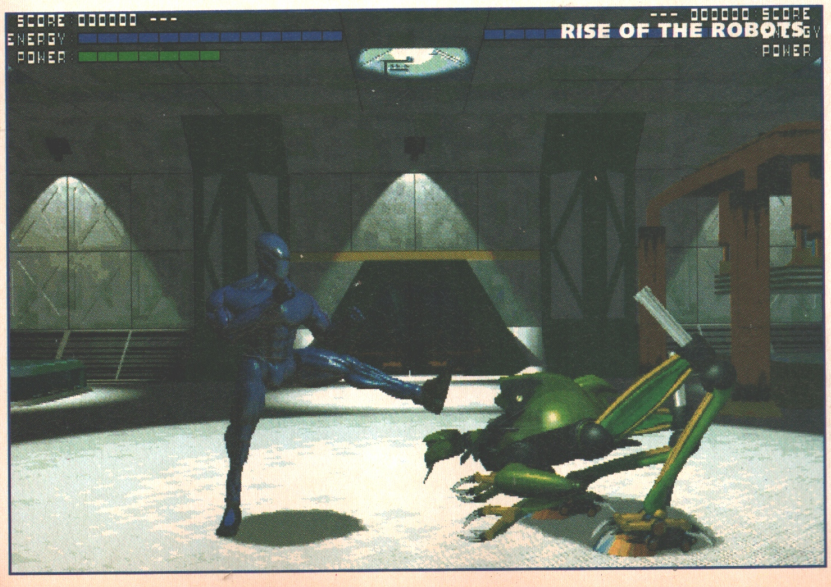
From: LucasArts
Format: CD-ROM
Another dose of Lucas-style humour in the Day of the Tentacle mode, This latest effort will involve the madcap adventures of two detectives - one a rabbit, the other a dog. See the review of the disk-based version on page 100 for more.

SOCCER KID

From: Krisalis
Format: Disk
A light-hearted platform game featuring a cute kid who can perform wonders with his football. A CD-ROM version follows in April.

S.U.B.

From: Thalamus
Format: Disk
Strategic Underwater Battles (clever name, huh?) is a futuristic submarine combat simulation, set in a post-apocalyptic world where man survives in a series of giant underwater cities. During the course of the action, there are pirates to fight, defence bases to be built and empires to conquer.



In the beginning there was darkness ...

From the Makers of the Award-Winning Alone In The Dark * comes

ALONE IN THE DARK II

"Promises to be bigger and faster and in every quantifiable way, better than the original"
PC GAMER

"superb animation"
EDGE

"seriously impressive"
PC REVIEW

"Fans of Alone In The Dark will not be disappointed"
PC ZONE

"will probably be one of the most popular games of 1994"
PC HOME

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* Alone In The Dark I now available on PC and CD Rom complete with "Jack In The Dark" (featuring characters from Alone In The Dark II)

ULTIMA VIII
From: Origin
Format: Disk
Another Ultima game, another complete rewrite of the Ultima game system. This latest instalment in the world's longest-running game series promises to be the most accessible of the lot. See the full in-depth preview on page 26.

ULTIMA VIII - SPEECH PACK
From: Origin
Format: Disk
And in similar style to all current Origin products, the pictures come in one box and the words in another.

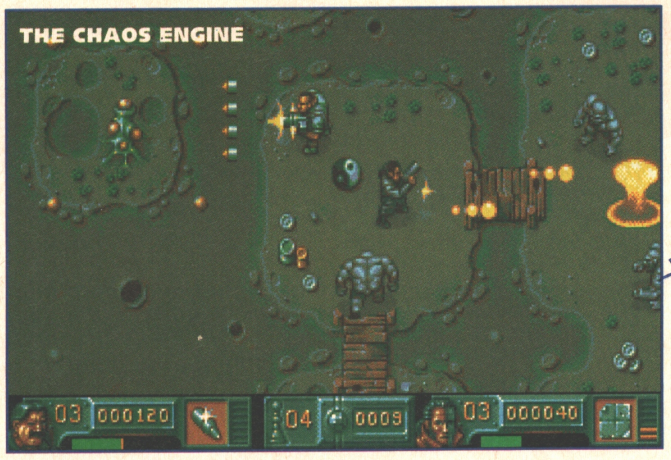
VICTORY AT SEA
From: Three-Sixty
Format: Disk
A progression in the award-winning 'V for Victory' series - this one will move from land to sea for a spot of WWII naval action.

WINTER OLYMPICS
From: US Gold
Format: CD-ROM
US Gold's six-sport winter games compilation (which actually incorporates a total of 14 separate disciplines) goes compact.

FEBRUARY

B.A.T. 2 - KOSHAN CONSPIRACY
From: Ubi Soft
Format: CD-ROM
Rather than make the usual graphic and sonic enhancements expected for a CD release, Ubi Soft has listened to some of the criticisms levelled at this one's original disk release and is to make this CD version somewhat easier to play as a result.

BATTLE ISLE II
From: Blue Byte
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
More user-friendly tabletop-style wargaming shenanigans in this full-blown sequel to the classic original (i.e. it's not *another* add-on disk). Rendered tanks, boats and planes are promised to bring the battle sequences to glowing life.



BENEATH A STEEL SKY
From: Virgin
Format: CD-ROM
A collaboration between Revolution Software (Lure of the Temptress) and famed comic book artist Dave Gibbons (Watchmen), Beneath a Steel Sky is an animated adventure which is already being hailed as the world's first interactive comic book adventure. See the review of the disk-based version on page 78 for more.

BEVERLEY HILLBILLIES
From: GameTek
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
The first fruits of a collaboration between GameTek and Capstone, The Beverley Hillbillies features the comic exploits of a family of unsophisticated farmers who, through no fault of their own, find themselves ensconced in one of America's richest areas. Should coincide with the release of a movie version of the 60s TV show.

BREACH 3
From: Impressions
Format: Disk
The third instalment in Impressions' popular strategy epic, Breach 3 will feature an all-new graphic interface, gameplay enhancements and even a scenario and campaign builder.

CAMPAIGN 2
From: Empire
Format: CD-ROM
Empire has drafted in a number of military advisors to add a touch of accuracy to this follow-up to last year's combat/strategy offering. Expected improvements include more than 100 new 3D shapes and numerous battle scenarios spanning the years from 1945 to 1995.

CARRIERS AT WAR II
From: SSG
Format: Disk
A sequel, obviously, this one takes its strategic gameplay to the WWII Pacific theatre.

THE CHAOS ENGINE
From: Renegade
Format: Disk
A conversion of the highly popular Amiga game from programming pop stars, the Bitmap Brothers. If that version is anything to go by, expect top-notch blasting action for one or two players.

DRAGONSPHERE
From: MicroProse
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
An graphic adventure/RPG in the style of previous MicroProse offerings Rex Nebular and Return of the Phantom. However, whereas those two games were more or less 'introductory' affairs, this one promises to offer a little more meat in its gameplay.

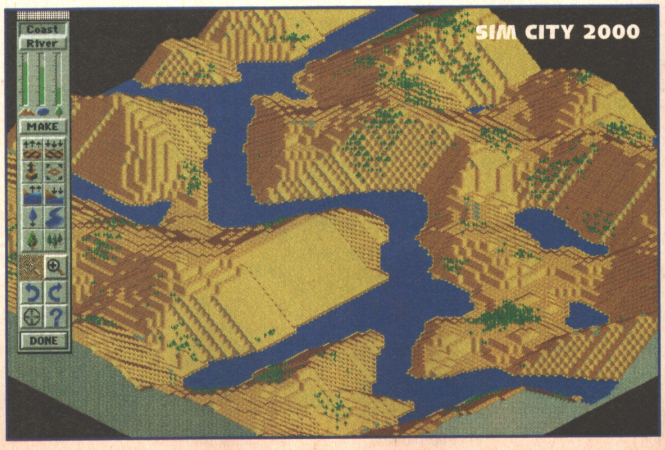
DREAMWEB
From: Empire
Format: Disk
A graphic adventure from debutante development team Creative Reality, Dreamweb will place its player in a city of the future - and right in the middle of a battle against an all-powerful force of evil.

LAWNMOWER MAN
From: Storm
Format: Disk
Enter the nightmare Virtual Reality world of Cyberjobe in Storm's first ever film licence, The Lawnmower Man. As the movie which inspired it was heavily influenced by electronic graphics and reality in the first place, this could very possibly be one of the most successful film tie-ins yet. For a full preview turn to page 36.

MANCHESTER UTD - PREMIER LEAGUE CHAMPIONS
From: Krisalis
Format: Disk
Indeed they are, and now it's your chance to share in the Red Devils' success with this, the latest in a long line of collaborations between Krisalis and Manchester's finest. The game's blend of arcade action and management strategy could offer your best ever chance of becoming both Ryan Giggs and Alex Ferguson.

PRIVATEER - SPECIAL OPS 1
From: Origin
Format: Disk
The first add-on for Origin's space combat/trading game.

SABRE TEAM
From: Krisalis
Format: Disk
Another simulation, this time of the exploits of the crack SAS, allowing you to Dare and (you hope) Win as you rescue hostages and defeat ter-



rorists. Why not try out the demo accompanying this magazine to find out more?

SAURUS

From: Virgin
Format: CD-ROM
Yet another offering from the hard-working monsieurs and madames at Cryo, Saurus will be yet another sprawling adventure game - this one featuring (would you believe?) talking dinosaurs let loose in a man's world.

THE SETTLERS

From: Blue Byte
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
Yet another 'people management' game, this one set in a series of small mediaeval settlements. Has received rave reviews for its release on other formats, mainly due to the extremely high 'cuteness factor' it possesses. Should do just as well on PC, if early preview versions are anything to go by.

SIM ANT

From: Interplay
Format: CD-ROM
Why, you might ask, is Interplay to publish a CD-ROM version of Maxis' simulation of a living ant colony? Good question - and maybe the answer has something to do with Interplay's willingness to head off to the desert to film hours of video footage of real-life ants for inclusion in the program.

SIM CITY

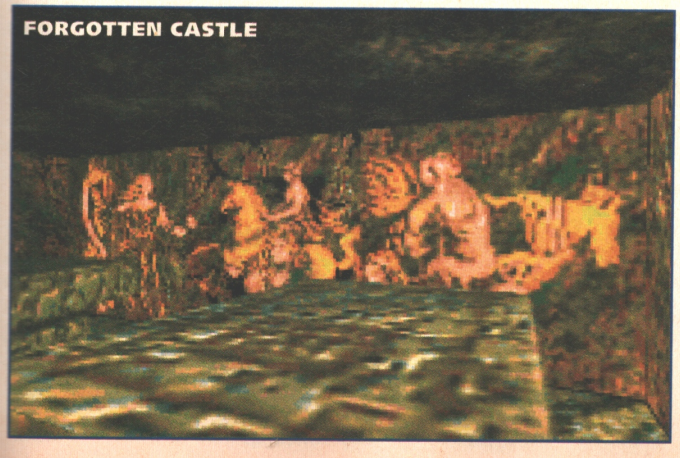
From: Interplay
Format: CD-ROM
Similarly, Interplay is to make full use of its growing multimedia expertise to enhance this classic urban planning sim for release on the shiny five-inch disc we know as 'compact'.

U.F.O.

From: MicroProse
Format: Disk
Not, unfortunately, a simulation of what it feels like to fly a cigar-shaped tube over the heads of gawping earthling or, for that matter, a licence of the classic Gerry Anderson TV show - instead this is to be an isometric-style arcade adventure where the player's task is to defend the Earth against uninvited guests from outer space.

WEREWOLF KA50

From: Virgin
Format: Disk
A simulation of an experimental military helicopter, which Virgin promises will offer the first real competition for MicroProse's definitive chopper program, Gunship 2000.


FORGOTTEN CASTLE

MARCH

ACROSS THE RHINE

From: MicroProse
Format: Disk
From the people who brought you M1 Tank Platoon, Across the Rhine will follow in that program's much-imitated tank tracks - although this time around, the action takes place during the Battle of the Bulge in the winter of 1944.

ARMOURED FIST

From: Novalogic
Format: Disk
The follow-up to Commanche, which has taken a little longer to perfect than many people, notably the developers, imagined. Hopefully the extra effort will shine through in this photo-realistic tank sim.

CANNON FODDER

From: Virgin
Format: Disk
War will never be this much fun again, once the Sensible Software team (of Sensible Soccer fame) offer their own particular slant on the military combat game. Promises to be a strategy game for those who don't take death too seriously.

CHESSMASTER 4000 TURBO

From: Software Toolworks
Format: CD-ROM
A beefed up, digital version of the best-selling chess program. Promises to fully support the MPC standard.

D-DAY

From: Virgin
Format: Disk
A multi-plane flight sim which will allow the player to take to the skies over the beaches of Normandy on June 4th 1944, as Operation Overlord marks the beginning of the end for the Third Reich.

DIGGERS

From: Millennium
Format: Disk
More complex than it looks, this action-based puzzler generated a real 'love it or loathe it' response when first released on Amiga format. Whatever your view, it will no doubt turn out to be a real hour-eater.

DRAGON TALES

From: Software Toolworks
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
Yet another fantasy adventure game from the Cryo team - when do these people sleep?

ELEVENTH HOUR

From: Virgin
Format: CD-ROM
Yet more real-time, digitised video scene-setting in Trilobyte's follow-up to 7th Guest. Once again the action is puzzle based, although it remains to be seen if the team can set as high standards of innovation as it did first time around.

EVASIVE ACTION

From: Software Toolworks
Format: CD-ROM
The Software Toolworks' head-to-head flight combat game - whose developers go to great lengths to insist is not a flight sim - makes a return on CD. Expect major enhancements in the sound department.

FLAT TOP

From: MicroProse
Format: Disk
MicroProse takes a logical step forward from the world of pure flight simulation with this, what it claims will be the first ever complete simulation of an aircraft carrier. A progression from Task Force 1942, Flat Top will allow its player to take the part of either ship's captain or pilot.

FORGOTTEN CASTLE

From: Twin Dolphin
Format: Disk
The first title from a new team which has emerged from the New World stable (whose credits include the Might & Magic series), this will be a first person, swords and sorcery epic making use of advanced 3D Studio graphics (as seen in Rise of the Robots).

THE INCREDIBLE MACHINE ROBOT

From: Sierra
Format: Disk
The Incredible Machine band-

wagon continues to roll, this time featuring a 'build your own robot' theme.

'THE INTERACTIVE MOVIE' (Working Title)
From: Origin
Format: CD-ROM
Very little is being revealed at present about this, the first ever non-Ultima game from 'Lord British' himself, Richard Garriott. What scant details have been revealed suggest that it's likely to be a multimedia adventure game which makes use of many cinematic techniques. We can but wait.

MORPH
From: Millennium
Format: Disk
Another arcade/puzzle game from Millennium, this one will feature the crazy teleporting adventures of Morris Rolph in a frantic race against the clock. Classic platform stuff.

NOMAD
From: GameTek
Format: Disk
An interactive space adventure game, GameTek's Nomad aims to separate itself from the pack by extensive use of humour. Like a certain other GameTek game which has just hit the shelves, this one will feature a mix of trading, exploration and combat action.

RED GHOST
From: Empire
Format: Disk
A US vs Russia strategy/simulation offering from Mike Singleton's Maelstrom team, Red Ghost can probably be best described as a Midwinter for the 1990s - all current improvements in PC gaming technology (fractal graphics, Gouraud shading, etc) will be included to help the player in his battles on land, in the air and at sea.

SEA WOLF
From: Electronic Arts
Format: Disk
The sequel to 688 Attack Sub, this simulation of a state-of-the-art submarine has been put together with the help of actual Pentagon blueprints. The setting will be a near-WWIII global conflict scenario.

SEVENTH SWORD OF MENDOR
From: Grandslam
Format: Disk
A Dungeon Master-style RPG, Seventh Sword of Mendor will actually come up from beneath the earth to include some above-ground action - in all, the world will comprise some 290 miles of game map.

SOCCER (Working Title)
From: Sierra
Format: Disk
A collaboration between Sierra's US developers and their newly-acquired chums in the French software house, Coktel Vision, this mix of action and management will attempt to combine the best elements of Sierra's Fronts Page Sports Football with a little European soccer expertise. May appear in two separate versions: one concentrating on management, the other on action.

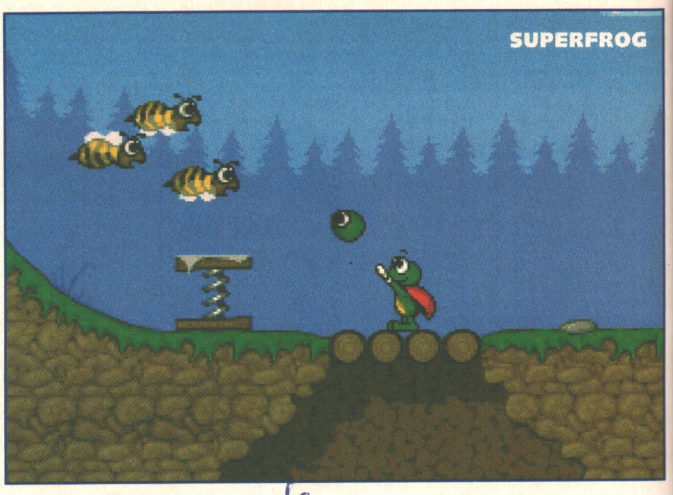
STAR REACH
From: Interplay
Format: Disk
One for real megalomaniacs this, as the object is to explore and conquer the entire universe. Will feature two-player head-to-head action.

SUPERFROG
From: Team 17
Format: Disk
Following the disappointment of Alien Breed, can Team 17 begin to build-up the same level of adulation they get on the Amiga with this, a cutesy platform romp starring a, er, frog? It was a big hit on the Commodore machine, but whether they can achieve that version's super-Sonic speed is yet to be seen.

SURVIVAL
From: Interactivision
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
A post-apocalyptic strategy game, Survival will ask its player to rebuild civilisation from a core group of 200 people who have survived the holocaust. Expect a variation on the Civilisation theme.

APRIL

A-10 TANK KILLER II
From: Dynamix
Format: Disk
A sequel to the simulation of the world's ugliest fighting plane. Heavily improved graphics are promised.



CARTOON RACER (Provisional title)
From: Grandslam
Format: Disk
A cartoon-style motor racing (very much in the style of the Super Mario Kart game which is so well loved by Nintendo owners), this one will be peopled, apparently, by a whole host of loveable characters.

EDEN
From: Maxis
Format: Disk
The 'sim' specialist goes green, as Maxis is to take some time off from asking us to build sprawling cities and instead indulge in a spot of conservation in the first ever rainforest simulation. Separate DOS and Windows versions are planned.

FLYING CIRCUS
From: Empire
Format: Disk
Chocks away and head off to face the Hun (or even play the part of the Hun if you so wish) in this factually-based WWI flight simulation from Rowan Software (Reach for the Skies).

HEIMDALL 2
From: Core
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
Core return to Norse legend with this, the sequel to their hit of two years ago. Heimdall, it seems, is now a man, and must battle the evil Loki for the fate of the world. Or something. Turn to page 34 for a full in-depth preview.

ISHAR 3
From: Silmarils
Format: Disk
Prepare to return to the Tolkienesque fantasy world of Ishar in this, the third offering in what's proved to be one of the most consistently popular series of RPGs.

STARDUST
From: Bloodhouse
Format: Disk
A combination of UK programming and Finnish game design, Bloodhouse has already been a surprise hit on its original Amiga release. Colourful shoot-'em-up action.

SKYLAND (Working Title)
From: Rebellion
Format: Disk
A 'god' game in the style of Populous, Skyland will ask its players to manage a wealth of unusual life forms, including goblins and unicorns, in what development team Rebellion describes as a "fantasy resource management" simulation.

WIZARD
From: Psygnosis
Format: Disk
An RPG adventure in the Ultima Underworld mould.

MAY

FLIGHT OF THE AMAZON QUEEN
From: Renegade
Format: Disk
A graphic adventure from Aussie newcomer Binary Illusions (a former comic book producer) this promises to follow in the footsteps of recent offerings from LucasArts and Sierra -

and just be the one to put Queensland firmly on the gaming map.

INTERNATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER

From: Domark
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
Domark takes its skill and experience in the field of footy management into the minefield that is world football. Efforts are being made to incorporate all major teams - although it remains to be seen if this will include Marseilles after their recent troubles.

LORDS OF MIDNIGHT - THE CITADEL

From: Domark
Format: Disk
Mike Singleton and co. return to the land they first visited many moons ago on the Spectrum with this, a fantasy RPG/strategy game. Has been brought into the 90s through the use of stunning 3D graphics and highly-advanced game engine. The Lords Of Midnight games were very big in their day, but it waits to be seen whether they'll translate into modern money-spinners.

MR MAGOO CLEANS UP

From: Millennium
Format: Disk
"Oh Mr. Magoo, you've done it again!" In what can only be seen as a short-sighted move, Millennium is to take the myopic adventures of the cartoon character who can hardly see past his nose from TV to disk.

STONE KEEP

From: Interplay
Format: Disk
A Dungeons and Dragons-style role-player, Stone Keep will combine full-screen digitised video graphics with an intuitive mouse and cursor key control method in an attempt to bring the RPG genre to a wider audience. A CD-ROM version will follow later in the year.

THE VILLAGE
(Working Title)

From: Rebellion
Format: Disk
A mediaeval Sim City anyone? The Village will set its player the task of managing a small, close-knit community, defending it from the perils of plague, pestilence and rampaging Vikings and eventually building it up to become a prosperous town. Planned as the first in a series of inter-linking programs.

WORLD CUP '94
(Provisional title)

From: Grandslam
Format: Disk
Although this is the only football game with a launch currently scheduled for the month prior to next year's World Cup, it's likely that it will be joined by a few others by the time final release schedules are determined. The working title is likely to change as soon as Grandslam signs up a 'big name' which it is currently pursuing.

JUNE

ACES OVER KOREA

From: Sierra
Format: Disk
The 'aces' series continues - this time heading for the 1950s and the first real jet-based air conflict above South-East Asia.

DESERT FIGHTER

From: System 3
Format: Disk
An arcade-style military combat game with more than a passing resemblance to Electronic Arts' Sega hit, Desert Strike, this one is currently undergoing conversion from Nintendo to PC in System 3's UK offices.

DUNGEON MASTER 2

From: Interplay
Format: Disk
The long-awaited sequel to what has become a by-word for role-playing games, Dungeon Master 2 is once again in the capable hands of the FTL development team. Planned improvements include 256-colour graphics, enhanced enemy intelligence, a larger map and new outdoor settings.

ELIZABETH

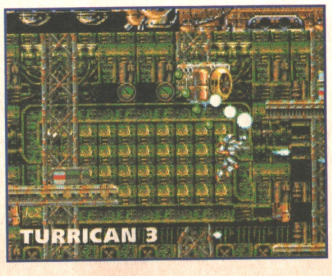
From: Ascon
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
An adventure game (with strong arcade elements) Elizabeth will see its player take on the role of an English sea captain at the time of the Spanish Armada, fighting to save his Queen from Continental invasion.

JAMES POND 3

From: Millennium
Format: Disk
Although there's a '3' in the title, this will actually be only the second PC appearance for Millennium's scaly superhero, James Pond (the first, Robocod, has now sold more than 1,000,000 copies in 14 separate versions). This time around, the speedy platform action takes place over 140 levels.

MAGICIAN'S CASTLE

From: Psygnosis
Format: Disk
A Disney-inspired adventure where a trapped magician calls up his top hat, shoes, gloves and wand to help him escape the clutches of his evil brother. Imagine an invisible man wearing just those items and you have a good handle on how the main sprite will look in this arcade adventure (with the emphasis on adventure).



PINKIE

From: Millennium
Format: Disk
Millennium obviously hopes that this new character - a loveable, if slightly inept, alien from the planet Purple - will follow in the highly successful footsteps of James Pond. To help him on his way, this first game will feature a combination of trendy environmental concerns and even trendier dinosaurs.

PUTTY SQUAD

From: System 3
Format: Disk
Arcade action with - well, a blob of putty really.

SMALL FURRY CREATURES

From: Millennium
Format: Disk
Similar in style to Diggers (see above) SFC will be something of a breakthrough in that it will be the first game ever to feature 'neural networking' (a form of artificial intelligence). The basic idea will be to hatch two small furry creatures (hence the name) and breed them into a strong living race. Described (by a Millennium spokesman at least) as being not so much a game as a work of art.

TURRICAN 3

From: Renegade
Format: Disk
Already a smash hit on the Amiga, Renegade hope to repeat that success with this conversion of the frenzied shoot-'em-up blast. The Amiga game used a lot of that machine's special graphics hardware so how it'll port across is anyone's guess.

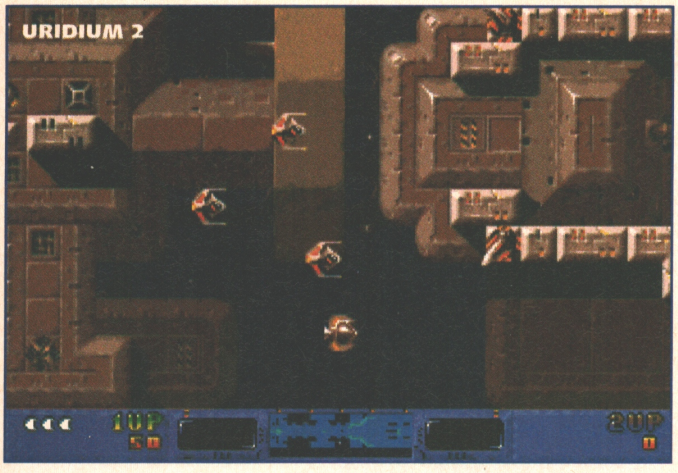
Z (Working Title)

From: Renegade
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
Very little is known about this one as yet, other than that it's a strategy/action game - and, more importantly, it's the first ever game developed specifically for PC by the Bitmap Brothers.

JULY

ALIEN BREED 2

From: Team 17
Format: Disk
The continuing adventures of a group of space marines trapped in a nightmare world, reminiscent of that which faced their counterparts in the film Aliens. Hopefully this one will enjoy greater success than the lacklustre original.



DOLL HOUSE
From: Maxis
Format: Disk
An architectural simulation, the products of which will potentially be available for inclusion in Sim City 2000. Will be available in separate DOS and Windows versions.

LIBERATION - CAPTIVE 2
From: Software Toolworks
Format: CD-ROM
A vast role-playing adventure, where the player must uses his four droids to scour a massive city for clues to the location of a poor soul wrongly imprisoned by the corrupt government. Has been well-received on the Amiga CD32, and there's no reason why it shouldn't do even better on PC.

PHANTASMAGORIA
From: Sierra
Format: CD-ROM
Roberta Williams (of Kings Quest and Laura Bow fame) moves away from her wholesome family image to produce a horror adventure, full of blood and gore. Some scenes may be so graphic that they will require a password system of some sort for access.

URIDIUM II
From: Renegade
Format: Disk
Andrew Braybrook's classic space shoot-'em-up, dragged screaming into the 1990s.

AUGUST

DRACULA
From: Psygnosis
Format: CD-ROM
An adventure which is not only licensed from the Francis Ford Coppola film, it will also make extensive use of full-motion video footage taken from the same.

SEPTEMBER

THE ADRENALINE FACTOR
From: Mirage
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
From the people who brought you Rise of the Robots comes this 'cyberpunk strategy blast-'em-up'. This will make use of yet another new graphics engine, featuring digitised texture-mapping.

ALBIA
From: Millennium
Format: Disk
Not so much a game as a garden simulation (!), Albia promises to be an unusual mix of artificial intelligence and horticulture - oh, and two-player gaming too.

ASSASSIN
From: Grandslam
Format: Disk
A space combat simulation/action game in the style of X-Wing.

IDEAL
From: Psygnosis
Format: Disk
A first-person perspective combat game set in an ideal world where people no longer fight to settle agreements, they climb into Virtual Reality simulations and bash each other that way. The only drawback of this system is that the loser is crushed by his machine. Best of luck.

INNOCENT 2
From: Psygnosis
Format: Disk
The continuing adventures of Jack T. Ladd, as he attempts to settle his tax bill by any means, fair or foul.

SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER
From: Renegade
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
The follow up to the massively playable Sensible Soccer promises to be the most ambitious football game ever devised. In what way? Only in that the Sensible Software team plan to include data on every single team of note in the entire world, in what should prove to be the most comprehensive mix of action and strategy yet. Not only will you be able to take your favourite team into competition with any other in the world, you'll also be able to rise to the rank of international manager and scour the globe for the best talent available. An awesome task.

THEATRE OF DEATH
From: Psygnosis
Format: Disk
A humourous war simulaton where the player will be able, like all the best commanders, to direct his troops from the safety of a remote console.

ALIEN BREED 2

OCTOBER

DISCWORLD
From: Psygnosis
Format: Disk
Developed by Teeny Weeny Games, Discworld is not only based on the works of the noted science fiction humourist Terry Pratchett, it also lists the author as one of its writers.

NOVEMBER

ALIEN BREED 3
From: Team 17
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
The continuing saga of two space heroes and 1,000,000 aliens - this time it will be developed on PC first.

COMBAT AIR PATROL
From: Psygnosis
Format: Disk
A 'pick up and play' flight sim set in the Gulf War, which flew straight to Number One on its Amiga debut.

KTM MOTOCROSS
From: Renegade
Format: Disk and CD-ROM
Innovations galore are expected from this motocross sim from Graftgold.

DECEMBER

EMBASSY SIEGE
From: Millennium
Format: Disk
Using a similar game 'engine' and style to the multi-character arcade strategy game Flag, Embassy Siege features hostage-bashing action by England's finest, the SAS.

AND SO, THERE YOU HAVE IT...
...1994, laid out for you from end to end. Of course, some of these games may suffer 'slippage' (i.e. get pushed back for release further on into the year) and some may not appear at all. But - hey! - that's the games business for you.

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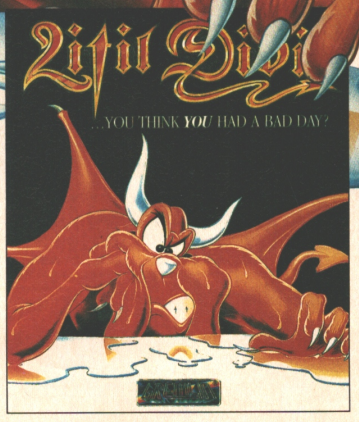

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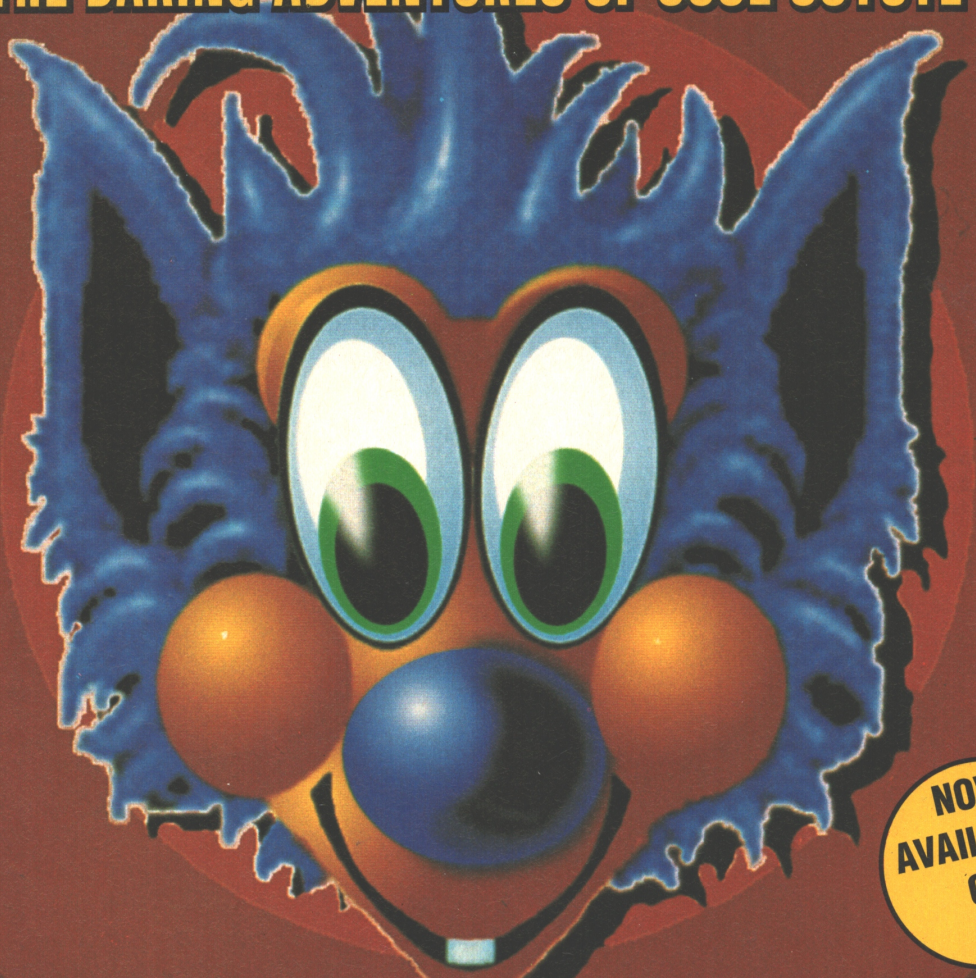

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GRAFTGOLD Creative Software

HOW DO THEY DO IT?

LucasArts can't seem to put a foot wrong at the moment - every game seems to have 'Winner' stamped on the box. Intrigued, Dean Evans uses the Force, thwarts purple tentacle and tries out the Mount Rushmore Prehistoric Bungee Cavalcade before taking a peek behind the scenes with the Star Wars people.

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away...." God bless those talented LucasArts people. If they aren't keeping us all occupied with their quirky graphic adventures, then we're all hooked by another Star Wars game, shouting "I can't shake him!" and going all misty-eyed whenever we hear the first few bars of that famous theme tune.

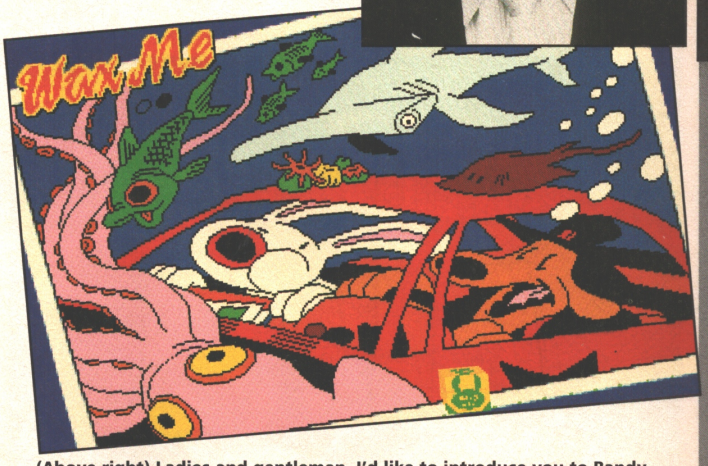
Yes, there are times when the name LucasArts seems almost legendary and when you walk into their company headquarters in San Rafael, California, you're walking into one of the most creative bits of brick and concrete in the US. Apparently.

The LucasArts story began innocently enough in 1982. In those early frontier days (a time of Commodore 64s, Spectrums and BBC Micros - ah , the memories...), the company released a couple of experimental fractal-based 3D games. After only moderate success, LucasArts turned their hand to the graphic adventure and the rest, as they say, is history.

Most of you will probably know that the fruits of their labours became Maniac Mansion, a mouse-driven graphic adventure currently making a welcome guest appearance in Day Of The Tentacle.

Since those heady EGA days LucasArts have gone from strength to strength. If you wander into your local software emporium you can guarantee that a LucasArts title will be occupying huge tracts of shelf space. With new releases Rebel Assault and Sam & Max (reviewed this issue) this is especially so. But who are these gifted LucasArts people? What makes them tick? What exactly are they up to next?

Let's start with the 'Who?'. George Lucas founded LucasArts (or the LucasArts Entertainment Company to give it its full and thrilling title) in



(Above right) Ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to introduce you to Randy Komisar, the President of LucasArts (why the Americans give their managing directors pretentious titles like this is beyond me). Of course, he's not black and white in real life.

(Above) Sam and Max in a typically surreal picture from their off-the-wall graphic adventure.

1982 in order to add the 'interactive' element to his vision of a state-of-the-art, multi-faceted entertainment company. It's brief was simply to produce the best interactive computer entertainment around, drawing on the films that he directed (like Star Wars) and also the films that he produced (such as the Indiana Jones trilogy).

Today the design philosophy of LucasArts is still modelled along the lines of its vast movie heritage. With each release, LucasArts aim to combine vital film elements (exciting storytelling, character development, believable settings, etc) with the most sophisticated technology available - fractals, 3D polygons, mouse-driven icon interfaces and so on. .

LucasArts is particularly well equipped for this and the magic 'Lucas' link is invaluable, especially if the company want to stay at the 'cutting edge' of computer entertainment.

LucasArts itself is only one of three companies that George Lucas has founded. The others are: Lucas Digital Ltd, which comprises Industrial Light and Magic and Skywalker Sound, a company that serves the needs of the entertainment industry for special effects and audio post-production - ILM has worked on the effects for Terminator 2, Jurassic Park, Indiana Jones and The Abyss, amongst many others. Then there's LucasFilm Ltd, the father of them all, which embraces George Lucas' film and TV interests, the THX group, Licensing and Toys.

(Above) Day of the Tentacle's quirky style helped establish the game as a firm favourite amongst PC gamers.

It's a big set-up, and as the realms of interactive games and movies converge LucasArts' desire to remain at the forefront of visual effects, sound and gameplay has led to some radical moves.

In 1992 LucasArts started an internal 3D studio to create extremely realistic and detailed special effects and objects. Fast 3D polygon routines brought the 'Star Wars' universe to life with X-Wing and now you can almost play the movie with Rebel Assault, a game rendered entirely in 3D and featuring full-motion video, digitised speech, extracts from the movie and some of the most frantic arcade gameplay we've seen this year.

Of course, the graphic adventure is LucasArts' other great passion and the teams of animators are now combining traditional detailed cartoon animation and storyboarding to produce stunning characters and backdrops. Animators are also using rotoscoping, a process derived from the film industry, where video footage of live actors (dead ones are no use) is fed through a computer program that digitises them into the game. This helps LucasArts to give their characters both realistic and natural movement.

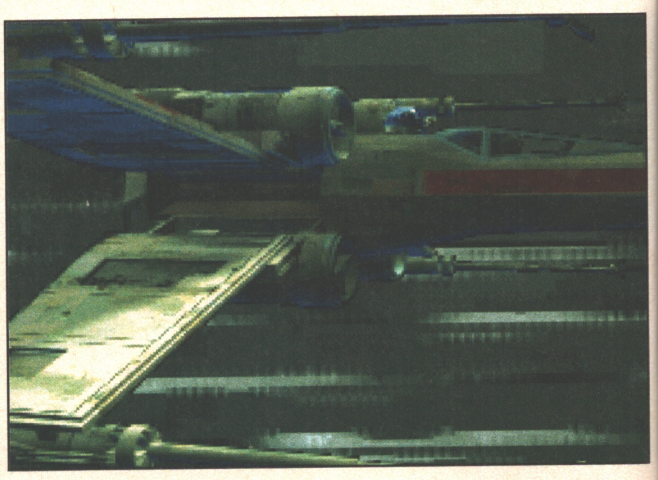
As for the musical side, like most major software companies LucasArts employs an internal team of composers to create the original musical scores and sound effects. Using the iMUSE (Interactive Music and Sound Effects) sound system, LucasArts are able to make the music and sound effects respond smoothly and spontaneously to the actions of the player. This interactivity gives the musical score in a game the same quality and importance it has in a film, namely setting mood, building suspense and accompanying hugely dramatic moments.

But what about George Lucas? Well the founder's input, apart from giving them his famous name, is minimal. Lucas doesn't really have much of a role in the day-to-day operation of LucasArts. Obviously he is especially busy (he's shooting three more Star Wars movies) but he does take an interest in the Star Wars film tie-ins. Apart from this LucasArts are left to run creatively amok by themselves.

CREATING REBEL ASSAULT

Rebel Assault is LucasArts' first CD-only game and a stunning one at that. The lead programmer on the project was Vince Lee, an ex-Amiga programmer who used to handle LucasArts' game conversions. Surprisingly, Rebel Assault is Vince's first major project - what a debut!

"We wanted to make Rebel Assault very immediate but still fun to play," explains Vince. "On PC there are currently only two categories of CD games, the first being the straight conversion of existing games onto CD and the other original CD titles that don't have any gameplay like 7th Guest. With Rebel Assault we didn't want to do either. LucasArts wanted to do a playable CD-based game, a game based on Star Wars that was not X-Wing."



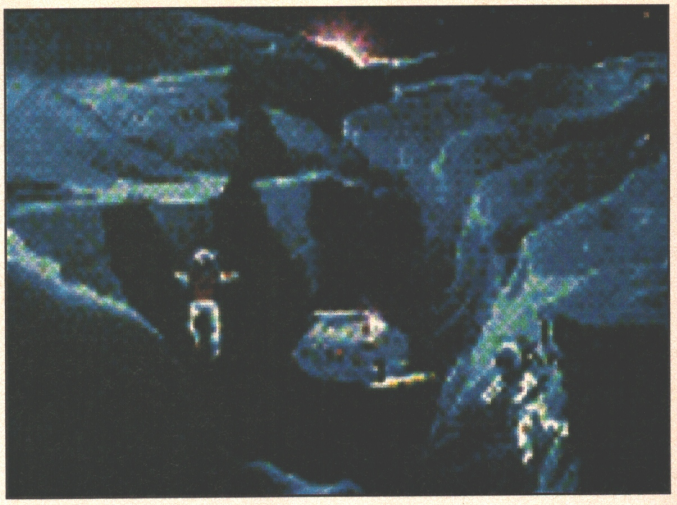
LucasArts are constantly looking to improve all aspects of their games, as is evident by comparing Sam and Max with Day of the Tentacle. Their traditional user-interface was replaced by a more Sierra-like icon selection, resulting in a much larger game screen.

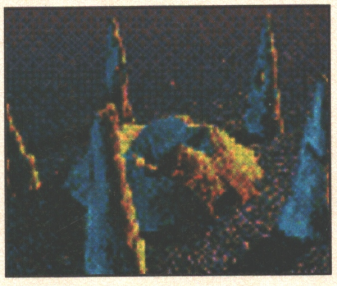
At the moment the programmers at LucasArts admit that because of the nature of CD it is difficult not to use it just as a delivery mechanism, simply hauling the graphics and the data straight off it. Although compact discs can store an enormous amount of data they are a management nightmare for the potential programmer.

"We've been working on Rebel Assault for about the past two years, using maybe ten to a half-dozen people. Like many games we do here we wrote the design tools especially to create the individual sections in the game. Unfortunately interactivity is still a problem and it's difficult to do a CD game without making it feel like a preset slideshow. That's why Rebel Assault combines all sorts of game styles."

"X-Wing appeals to people who like games with lots of buttons, whereas with Rebel Assault you can sit down, fly over terrains and landscapes without reading any instructions."

And it's a good thing too, because when I got my copy of Rebel Assault it didn't come with any instructions. Then again, do you really need a 32-page manual to explain up, down, left, right and fire? I think not. Vince is remaining tight-lipped about his next project but no doubt it'll be a corker!





(Top, above and left) Some early screenshot from Spielberg's The Dig. The final game is likely to look quite different to this - as we speak LucasArts are overhauling the game engine. And the shots will be in focus.

(Above) Steve Purcell (middle) and some blokes who work for LucasArts. Probably.

And "amok" they have most certainly run, because the LucasArts back catalogue contains most of the best-selling games of the past four years: Loom, The Secret of Money Island, Monkey Island 2, Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis, X-Wing (and assorted mission disks), Day of the Tentacle, Rebel Assault and Sam & Max Hit the Road (phew!).

If Maniac Mansion was a computer milestone, the 'talky' was yet another ground-breaking chapter scribbled onto the games industry notepad. Due to its movie links, LucasArts enjoys being able to employ a whole host of professional actors, producers, directors, scripts and sound studios for its CD-based 'talky' games.

The first of these was Fate of Atlantis, a game that was also innovative due to its multiple paths game structure. Based on choices made early in the game, the player is led down either a puzzle-orientated 'wits' path, an action-orientated 'fists' path or the 'team' path where Indy and his sidekick Sophia must work together to solve puzzles. But the big change was the fact that all the game text was replaced with digitised speech.

"We had an outstanding cast that truly brought these characters to life" remembers Tamlynn Barra, the game's producer. The production itself featured approximately 40 characters and over 8000 lines of dialogue. Barra and the Indy team spent four weeks in a studio recording the voices. "It was very challenging to cast Fate of Atlantis," continues Barra. "In addition to trying to find the right voice for Indy, there are characters in the game from all over the world - all with their own particular dialects..."

Er, yes. Anyway after a shaky first attempt, the talky has improved and has literally set the standard for CD adventure games. Any game worth it's development costs must now feature digitised speech all the way through. If it doesn't there's no point it being on a CD at all. It's that simple.

Innovation has been the watchword with LucasArts and after Monkey Island and Indy, they finally followed up with X-Wing (arguably the most playable space combat sim ever) and have gone on to release Day Of The Tentacle (dubbed an the world's first "interactive cartoon"), Sam & Max Hit the Road (an anarchic blend of adult humour and cartoon violence) and Rebel Assault (a superbly atmospheric arcade game with film quality graphics).

But what of the future? That's what you're really interested in isn't it? There's all this interesting company chit-chat and all you want to know about is the games. Typical. Well, apart from Day of the Tentacle, Sam and Max Hit the Road and Rebel Assault, LucasArts have some absolute stunners up their collective sleeves. A few phone calls here, a fast-paced interview there and I managed to sneak a look at..

THE DIG

The year is 1998. A mile-wide asteroid hurtles out of deep

space, threatening to collide with the Earth. A space shuttle crew sets out on a mission to prevent a global catastrophe and finds itself swept away by an alien booby trap to a world of danger, mystery, sudden death and awe-inspiring wonder.....

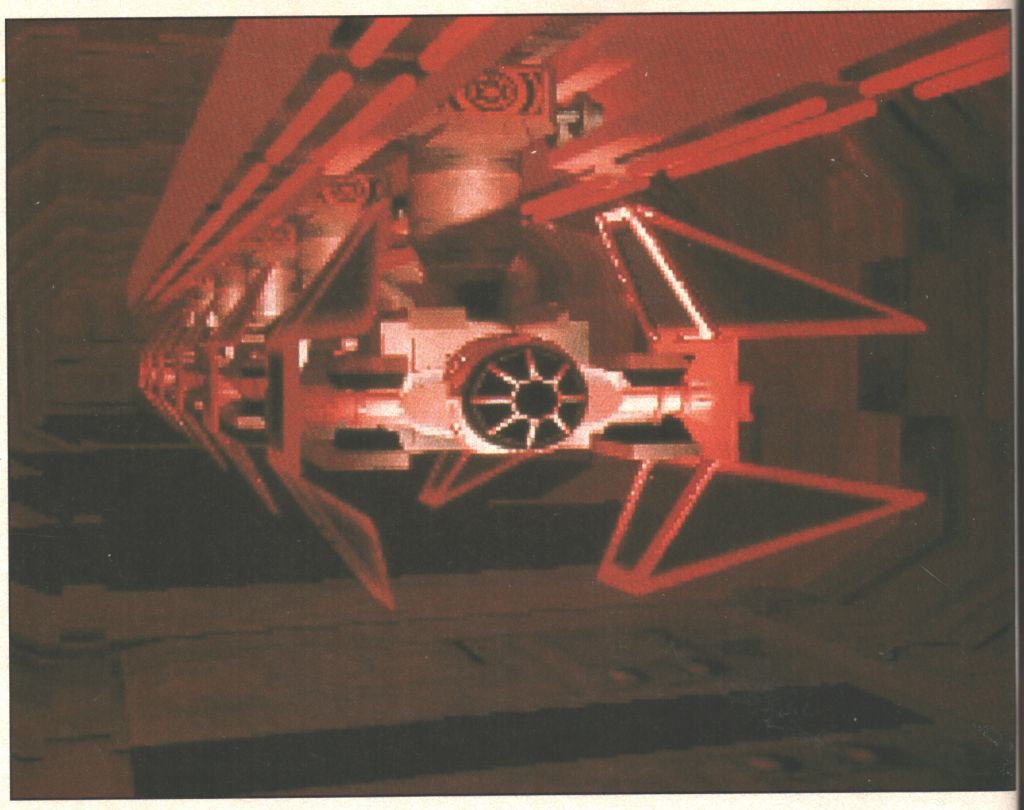
Little is known about The Dig but it has leapt to fame because it is a joint project between Brian Moriarty and one Steven Spielberg. Yes, THE Steven Spielberg. Steve to his friends.

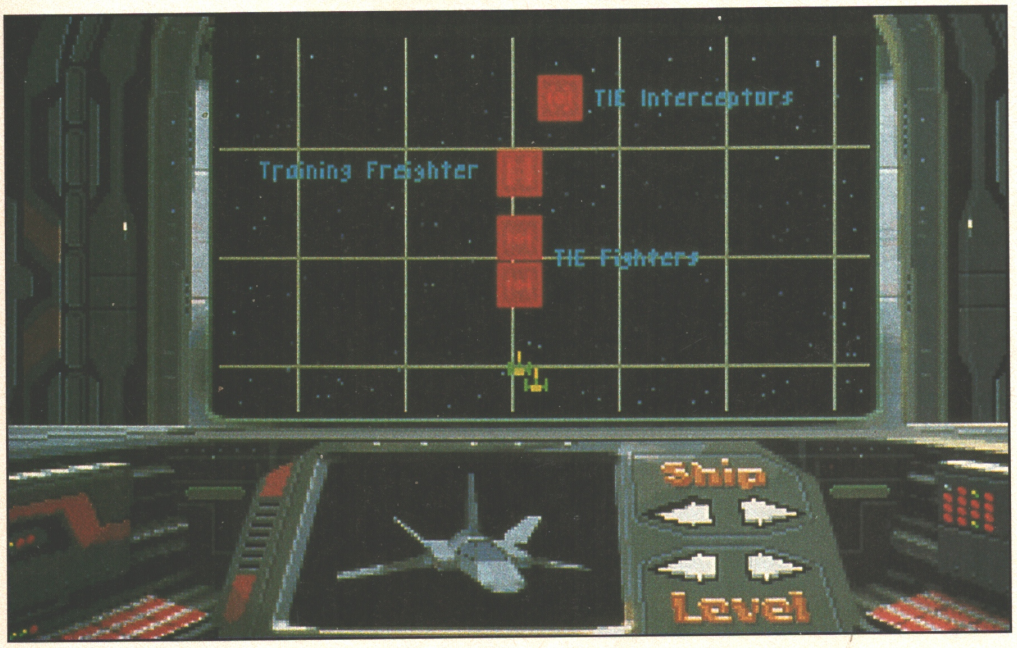
Unfortunately you've got a long wait for this one because LucasArts are aiming to release The Dig in late 1994, leading with CD-ROM and then following up with the disk-based version.

TIE FIGHTER

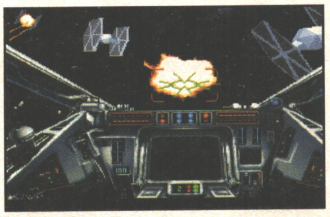
Did you ever wish that you weren't a goody-two-shoes rebel pilot? Ever want to dress all in black and replace half your organs with cybernetic body parts? Well, LucasArts can help you out with the first one because TIE Fighter is the sequel to the superb X-Wing. This time you get to fly for the Empire, taking your place as an Imperial pilot in training, combat missions and three tours of duty against the Alliance.

TIE Fighter promises to have more advanced polygon graphics than its predecessor but will retain all the gameplay elements that made X-Wing such a success. Six different fighters will be at your disposal: the TIE fighter, bomber and TIE interceptor, the Advanced TIE, the Assault Gunboat and the under-wraps TIE starfighter. Lawrence Holland and Edward Kilham, co-designers of X-Wing, are leading the TIE Fighter team and like X-Wing the game will feature digitised speech and a completely original musical score.





(Above and left) The next LucasArts game will be TIE Fighter, a game very much in the X-Wing vein but with "improved graphics." Knowing how there's a bad guy lurking deep within us all, this should repeat X-Wing's incredible success.



The X-Wing may be giving the TIE Fighter what for, but the tables will most certainly be turned in the forthcoming TIE Fighter space combat simulator.

INDIANA JONES V

Hmmm. Things are a bit vague on this one but I'm reliably informed that a fifth Indy instalment is definitely on the drawing board. Whether or not it will follow the rumoured Indy IV motion picture's plot is as yet undecided. Expect more news soon...

REBEL ASSAULT 2

Wild and unfounded speculation on my part, but a second Star Wars CD game looks likely. There's this bit at the end of Rebel Assault where Darth Vader says "The rebels may have won this time..." blah blah but like all good villains, he'll be back. Anyway they haven't done the speederbikes on the moon of Endor yet.

MONKEY ISLAND 3

Absolutely no plans whatsoever. Sorry Guybrush fans.

Whatever their plans the future for LucasArts looks rosier than a florists shop window on Valentine's Day. But strangely enough LucasArts don't enjoy the same popularity over in the US as they do in the UK. Quite why this is the case, nobody seems to know. It seems funny that games like DOTT and Rebel Assault don't have the same effect on the American audience as they do on us.

But despite all this, LucasArts will continue to slog it out with companies like companies like Spectrum Holobyte, Sierra and Virgin. They will continue to honour the Star Wars ideal and are continually striving to improve upon their last release. 1994 promises to be an exciting year for LucasArts, and if you'll excuse me I'm going to get back down to fighting the Empire in Rebel Assault.

"They won't escape me this time...."

YOU ASKED FOR IT!

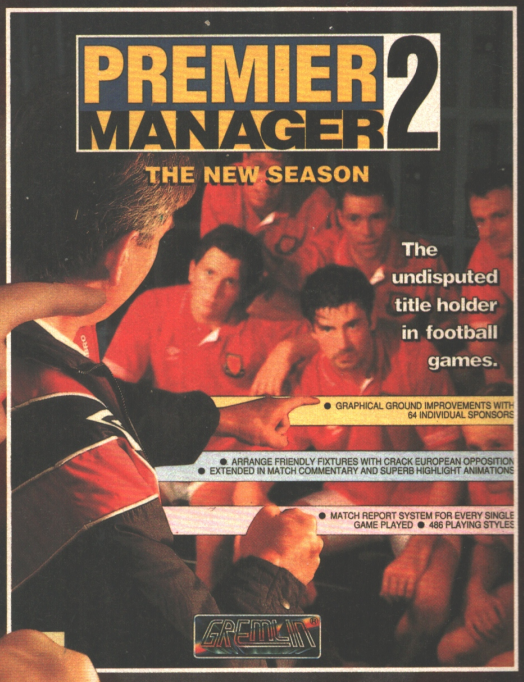
PREMIER MANAGER transformed the face of **STRATEGY** football management games with its accessible and enjoyable game style. It has remained in the charts since it's release late in 1992. And now, **PREMIER MANAGER 2** is ready with a whole host of added features.

Have you the management skills to turn around and improve your teams performance?

Get ready to blow the whistle on **THE** football game for 1993.

FEATURES INCLUDE:

■ 16 playing formations with 8 playing styles and 12 match tactics. ■ Negotiate wages, bonuses and contracts. ■ Comprehensive banking system with changeable interest rates. ■ Up to 26 players per team with limit of 4 foreign. ■ Set ticket prices and crowd control. ■ **IMMEDIATE** sacking possible if you're not up to the job.



"This really is the best bits of all the footy games, bundled together and laid out on a golden plate for you."
The One 90%.

YOU GOT IT.

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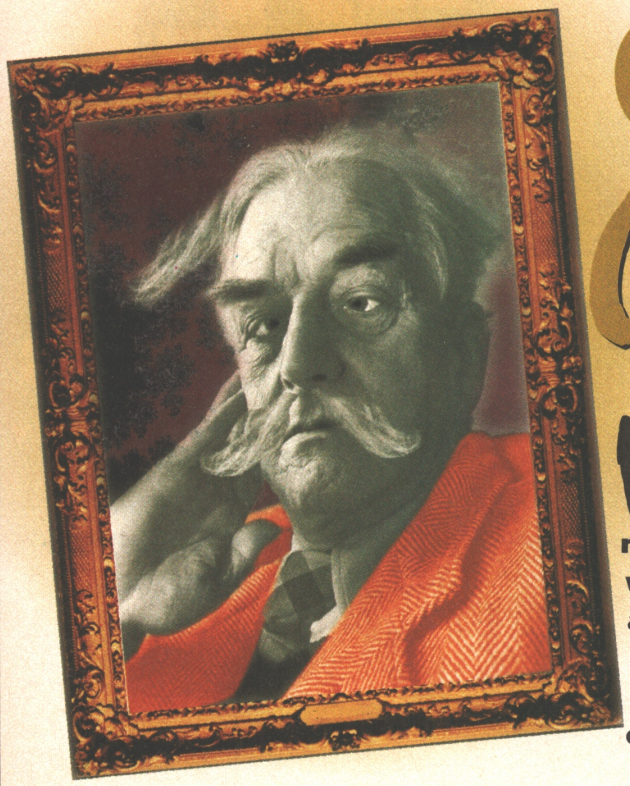
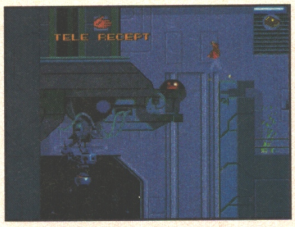


GAMES Gallery

Welcome, dear friends, to the Games Gallery, home of the classics. Here you'll discover those games that experts agree to be foremost in their respective fields. My name, by the way, is Sir Harvey Barrington, famed games-as-art critic. As you browse through the Gallery's hallowed hallways and quiet avenues I will endeavour to enlighten you with my personal observations and opinions on each game...

ARCADE ACTION

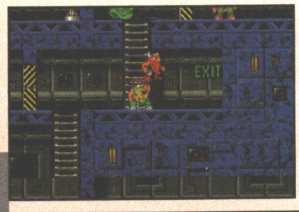
FLASHBACK
US Gold



A rather smart arcade adventure with a Total Recall-ish plot about a man who has had his memory erased by alien fiends intent on taking over the world. Although the gameplay amounts to little more than run, jump and shoot, the startlingly realistic animation and cinema-style sequences punctuating the action make this one of the most engrossing and enjoyable games around.
"Throughout the game the hero endlessly ponders "Who am I?", thus forcing the player to examine his own concepts of identity."

THE LOST VIKINGS
Interplay

Three beardy-weirdy Norsemen have been kidnapped by aliens for their zoo. Now, by using each Viking's individual talents in various permutations, you must help them to negotiate level after level of hazards and monsters and escape back home.
"In the aftermath of the 80s, widely regarded as the 'Me' decade, The Lost Vikings teaches important lessons about the value of cooperation in achieving goals."



WIZKID
Ocean

Wizkid appears to be a simple Breakout-style 'bash the bricks' game, but scratch away the simplistic surface and you find there's a very strange and very funny graphic adventure/puzzle game waiting to be discovered. It's weird, it's bizarre and it's really got to be seen to be believed!
"This is a bizarre blend of Dali-esque surrealism and Carry On-style lavatorial humour that, against all odds, works. A triumph."

ADVENTURE

DAY OF THE TENTACLE
US Gold

Doctor Fred's mutant tentacles are trying to take over the world - and the only people who can stop them are lost in time! This is LucasArts' most excellent adventure yet, featuring a super-slick player interface, amusing characters, cracking gags and some cunning cross-time puzzles that'll keep you stumped for days.
"An essential game, drawing on various pop culture icons and references to create a totally unique experience."

INDIANA JONES & THE FATE OF ATLANTIS
US Gold

Join Indy and his psychic sidekick Sophia on an around-the-world jaunt to find Atlantis before - you guessed it - the Nazis. Although lacking the out-and-out humour of LucasArts' other adventures (i.e. Monkey Island, DOTT), this is still brilliant fun.
"Although unfamiliar with the 'Indy' character (I prefer to shy away from the so-called 'Hollywood blockbusters') I found this rich in period detail and immensely enjoyable."

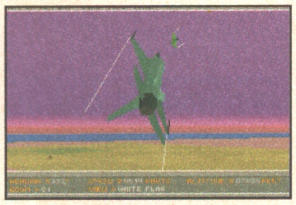
ALONE IN THE DARK
Infogrames

A classy 'haunted house' style adventure which uses stunning 3D polygon graphics overlaid on painted backdrops to depict the action. It's tense stuff, with the player never quite sure of what's around the corner. And don't play it alone late at night, will you?
"A highly stylised Gothic horror evoking an atmosphere of the classic works of Edgar Allan Poe."

FLIGHT SIMULATION

FALCON 3.0

MicroProse

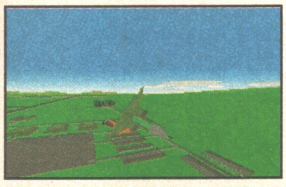


Competition in the flight sim genre has always been intense, but if you're looking for the most realistic Falcon 3.0 literally soars above the rest. However this realism has been achieved at the expense of visual beauty and the graphics are dull, often badly-drawn polygons. But, if you're desperate to fly an F-16, who cares?
"One night in my bedchamber I dreamt the dream of flying, and these dreams came true with Falcon 3.0"

TORNADO

Digital Integration

If you're the kind of person who likes to fly British, then Tornado does for the, er, Tornado what Falcon 3.0 does for the F-16. Tornado simply oozes realism and has one of the most comprehensive mission designers ever to appear in a flight sim.
"The essence of aviation in binary form, created by stout yeomen of our fair isle."



GUNSHIP 2000

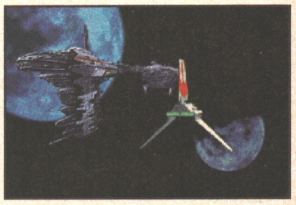
MicroProse

The helicopter is often the poor relation when it comes to flight sims but, though old, G2000 is still far and away the best chopper sim on the market.
"Leonardo da Vinci saw helicopters as machines of elegant beauty. Would he have ever believed that they would be turned into foul instruments of war?"

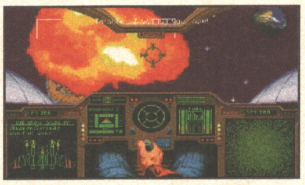
OTHER SIMULATIONS

X-WING

US Gold



You've collected every crappy plastic toy figure, bought the silly torch-glued-to-a-plastic-tube fake lightsabre and even looked a bit sad wearing a rubber Darth Vader mask. Now you can fulfil your ultimate Star Wars fantasy and pilot an X-Wing (or an A-Wing or a Y-Wing) against the Empire in this cracking space dogfight sim. Red Five standing by...
"X-Wing is little more than an updated fairytale which appeals on the most fundamental level, fulfilling the child-like wish that good will eventually triumph over all-powerful evil."



WING COMMANDER

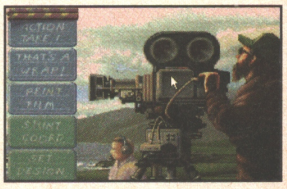
Origin

The game that started the push to turn games into movies, WC combines simplistic space dogfight action with film-like presentation between missions.
"Although primitive compared to the later work of, say, LucasArts or Origin themselves, this remains a charming period piece."

STUNT ISLAND

Infogrames

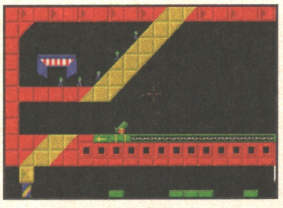
Fancy flying through a barn in a biplane? Now you can! Even better, you can create your own 'stunt movie'. Although lacking any real 'aim' this is still great fun.
"Puts the awesome power of cinema into the hands of the ordinary man in the street."



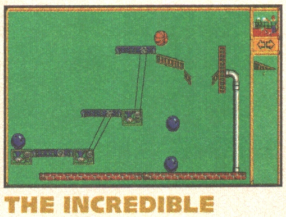
PUZZLE

LEMMINGS 2: THE TRIBES

Psygnosis



There can't be a person in the civilised world who hasn't heard of the Lemmings. If, however, you somehow slipped through the net then get acquainted with the aid of this superb sequel. The object is simple - guide all the suicidal Lemmings to the exit using the various skills at your disposal - but in practice it's much more complex and incredibly addictive to boot.
"I found the tiny Lemmings creatures very reminiscent of the matchstick men in Lowry's paintings. Although much cuter."



THE INCREDIBLE MACHINE

Sierra

Using your limited supply of cogs, bike-riding monkeys, pulleys, weights, see-saws and other assorted gadgets, you have to achieve various pre-set tasks. It's a bit like computerised Mousetrap and very compulsive.
"A subtle lampooning of the dangerous complexity of our over-mechanised society."

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

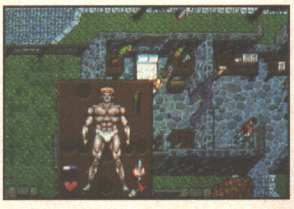
Infogrames

Although aimed at the kiddies' educational software market, Beauty and the Beast is still worth a look for its truly exquisite graphics and surprisingly engaging puzzles.
"I am not ashamed to admit this computerised rendition of the timeless fairytale still had the power to move me deeply."

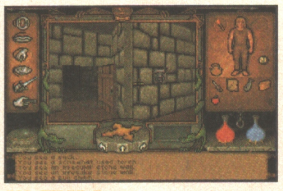
ROLE-PLAYING

ULTIMA VII

Origin



Using a tight isometric viewpoint, Ultima VII is the latest (until Ultima VIII arrives, of course) episode in the Avatar's endless struggle against the evil Guardian. The Ultima series brings RPG action onto the computer screen, with character interaction, internal politics and traditional 'beat up monsters and grab lots of treasure' gameplay.
"Even Tolkien's fantasies pale in comparison with the intertwined plots and complex characters of Lord British's elaborate myth."



ULTIMA UNDERWORLD

Origin

The RPG you've always dreamt of. The fantasy world is viewed in super-smooth 3D and you are given total freedom to explore it. It hasn't quite got the depth of Ultima VII but it has more sheer pulse-racing excitement.
"This claustrophobic trek into the bowels of the earth brings to mind Dante's nightmarish voyage through Hell."

WIZARDRY VII

US Gold

If there's a game that could proudly stand alongside Ultima Underworld, then Wizardry VII must be surely be it. Although it reuses all the old RPG features, it is notable for its well-designed combat, auto-mapping facility and involving storyline.
"Despite its overt fantastic nature, Wizardry VII contains moral lessons of relevance to the modern world."

SPORTS SIMULATION

FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX

MicroProse

Now here's your chance to win Grand Prix glory in this exhilirating and highly-realistic F1 simulation. The 3D, while fast, isn't quite as detailed as you might like but doesn't detract from what is by far the best racing game yet.
"A graphic depiction of man's obsession with speed."

LINKS PRO

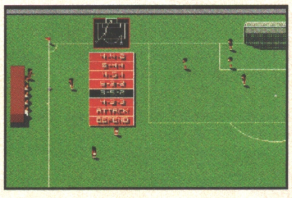
US Gold

There are enough golf games around to fill a bunker but none are as satisfying or enjoyable to play as Links Pro. It's flexible enough to be fun for the amateur while also offering plenty of realism for the pro. All it lacks is a 19th Hole feature.
"As tranquil a rendition of the noble art of golf as one could possibly wish fore, er, for."

SENSIBLE SOCCER

Renegade

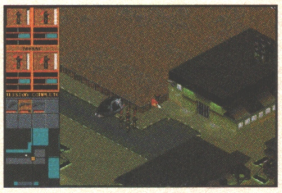
The Amiga footy classic comes to the PC in great style. It may not look much but it plays like a particularly saucy dream. The game really comes into its own when played against a friend.
"There is no greater honour than to die for one's country, something which England's football team manage to do with monotonous regularity."



STRATEGY

SYNDICATE

Electronic Arts



If you like your strategy laced with excessive violence then you need look no further than Syndicate. As boss of a global megacorporation you have to use the foulest means possible to compete against your rivals, sending teams of cybernetically-enhanced agents to infiltrate enemy complexes and steal secrets or kill key personnel.
"Paints a dark, brooding portrait of a society dominated by commerce gone mad. Entertainment or a dire warning for the future? You decide."

DUNE

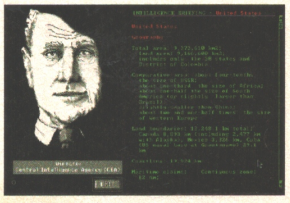
Virgin

Based on the classic SF novel, Dune casts you as Paul Atreides competing against the evil Harkonnens in a bid to become ruler of Arrakis, source of the spice Melange.
"Although dispensing with the more outré elements of the Lynch film, this still retains the brooding atmosphere that made that work so affecting."

SHADOW PRESIDENT

DC True

While not 'fun' in the strict sense of the word, this is still a fascinating and thought-provoking simulation of the political problems that face the President of the US of A.
"A compelling piece which easily ranks alongside such works as Kubrick's Dr Strangelove."



WORLD BUILDER

CIVILIZATION

MicroProse

The latest and greatest from strategy master Sid Meier. Your task is to build a viable civilisation from scratch and, through exploration and invention, progress it from a primitive stone-age culture to one capable of reaching the stars. It's a massive and ambitious idea that works, making Civilization the most involving strategy game ever.
"Invites the player to walk in the footsteps of such colossi as Alexander the Great. An awesome achievement from an artist at the height of his powers."

RAILROAD TYCOON

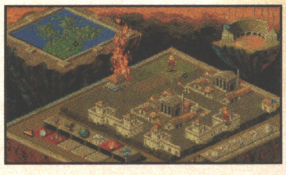
MicroProse

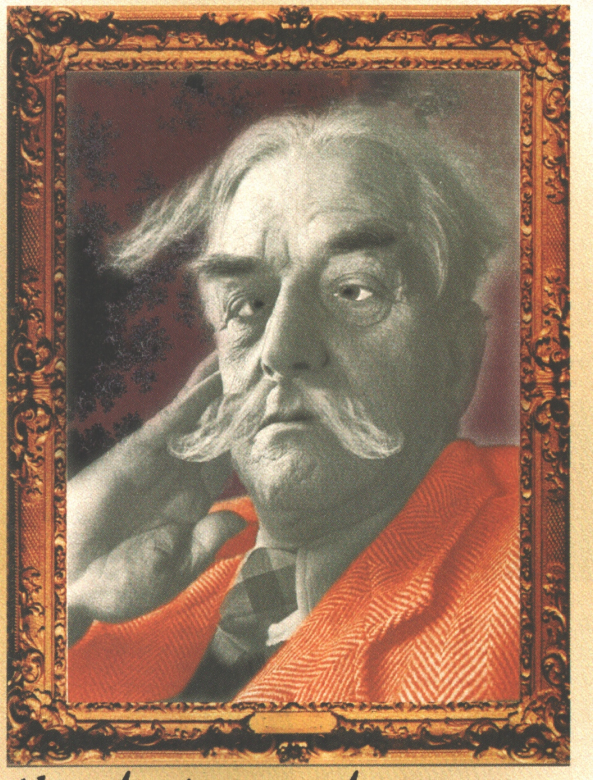
Another Sid Meier game but this one has slightly humbler aims than Civilization's, although no less difficult to achieve - this time you've got to build and maintain a rail network at the turn of the century. Great fun for those with or without anoraks.
"Railroad Tycoon's spell-binding gameplay draws the viewer into this romantic vision of the Golden Age Of Steam."

POPULOUS 2

Electronic Arts

The (almost) best just got better. As a deity, you must use your divine powers to help your people grow and prosper while defending them against the machinations of rival supreme beings. Being a god has never been so much fun!
"Raises the potent metaphysical question: If one were bestowed with the powers of a god, would one use them for good... or evil?"





Kindest regards,
Sir Harvey Barrington.

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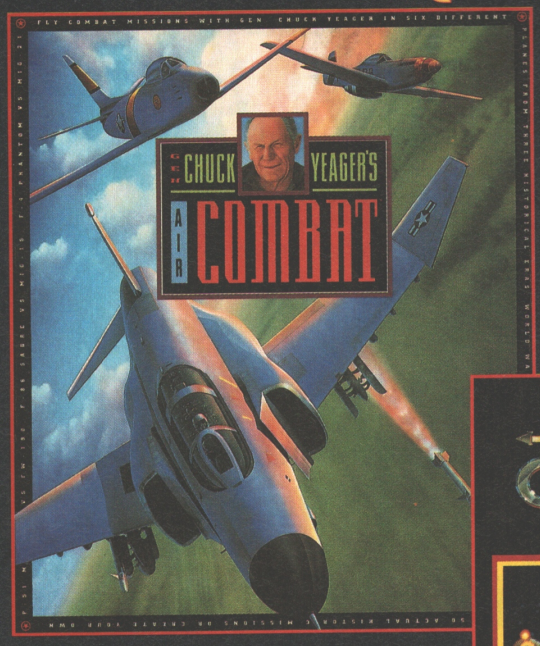

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super atmosphere...it'll blow your mind".
RAZE - 93%
"One of the finest games of all time".
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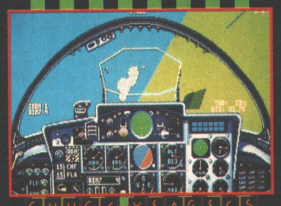
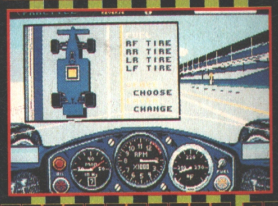
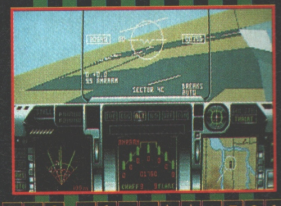

CHUCK YEAGER'S AIR COMBAT

WING COMMANDER

MAGIC CANDLE 2


INDIANAPOLIS 500

ULTIMA VI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At the other end of the world, far across the sea of Oshmar, lies the dire continent of Gurtex, where the Children of Light are preparing a campaign against the growing Forces of Darkness. But the vile Leaders of Darkness have trapped the lost guardians of the Magic Candle in evil candles of their own.

* Assign tasks to your companions while you and the rest of your party continue on the adventure.
* Intelligent conversation with non-player characters who have independent personalities.
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"An excellent example
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-PC REVIEW

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"It's very, very nice".
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* Stunning full colour graphics and vivid animations.
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* Immediately begin playing and enjoying.
* Longterm play value - you may never see it all!

"Excellent gameplay,
well designed"
- PC REVIEW

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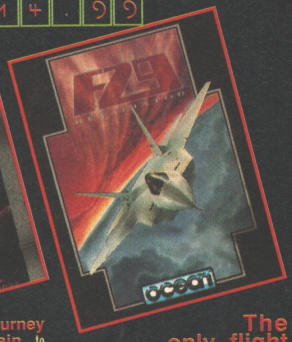

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reviews

Just look at this lot! That's NINETEEN games reviewed, some old, some new, but all likely to be on someone's Christmas present list this Winter. Quite simply, it's the essential guide to the games worth buying this Chrimbo - very handy, eh?

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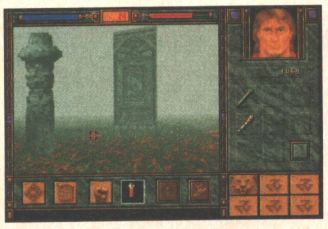
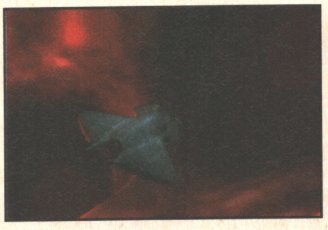
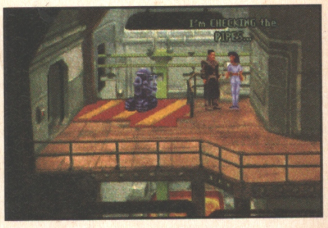
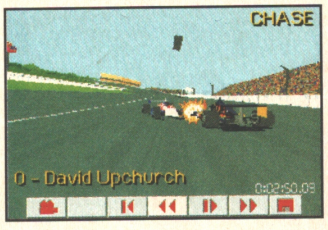
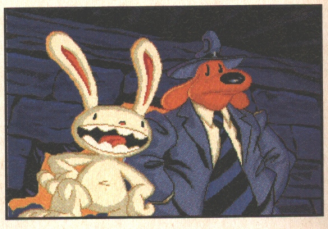
98	T2: The Arcade Game	Virgin
100	Sam & Max Hit The Road	US Gold











HOW WE REVIEW

Everyone at What PC Games is a complete PC games nut. That's why, we like to think, we know exactly what you want to see in a game review. So what do you get? Well, you get all in the info you need and no waffling - we get straight to the point.

On top of that you get loads of big, clear screenshots of the game in action, along with maps and diagrams helpfully illustrating any major gameplay features - after all, a picture, as they say, speaks a thousand words.

Then we compare the big games with another of similar type. Typically this will be the best game in its genre so you'll probably be pretty familiar with it, thus giving you a handy point of reference.

Finally, we have the essential score panel...

All the guff you need to know about who publishes the game, who developed it, its price and when it's due to be released. You even get a contact phone number to call if you want more info.

Details the minimum type of machine you'll need to run the game, along with how much valuable hard disk space the game consumes and what optional peripherals it'll recognise.

The game's good and bad points, which are basically a concise summary of the criticisms made in the main review.

The overall score. We don't see any point in ratings for playability and all that other stuff - you get one mark to sum everything up and that's it. Typically, anything over 70% is worth buying if you like that sort of thing while anything over 90% is an essential part of your software collection.

DAY OF THE TENTACLE

US Gold/LucasArts
(021 625 3388)
£42.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 286 PC with 640K of memory, a VGA graphics card and a hard disk (15.3Mb of space needed).

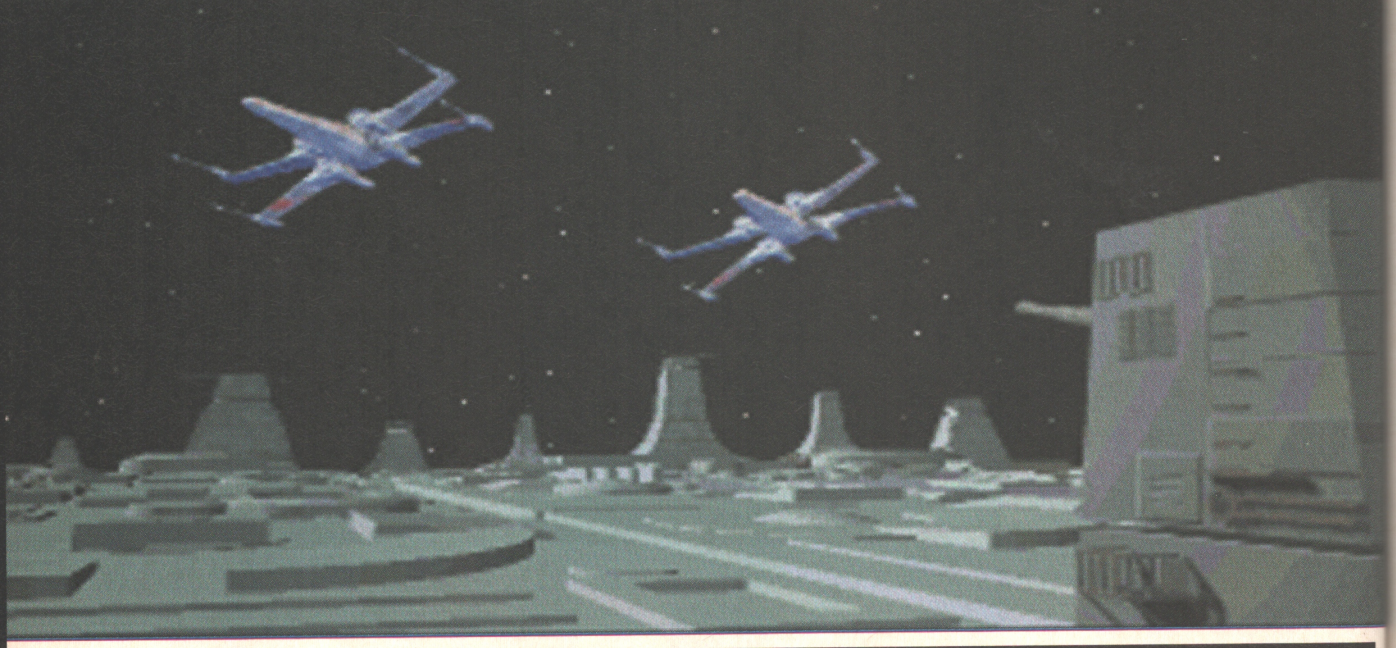
ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib, Soundblaster and Roland soundcards; a mouse.

THE GOOD...
- The plot is inspired, and provides some excellent time-spanning puzzles.
- It makes love to your eyes, your eyes, your brain and your chuckle muscles.
- The SCUMM player interface is friendlier than ever.

...AND THE BAD
- Couldn't it have been a bit longer, LucasArts?

OVERALL 94%

REBEL ASSAULT



Once again David 'Skywalker' Upchurch prepares to save the universe from the Darth Vader and the Empire in this, the much-anticipated CD release from LucasArts.

The modern cinema goer is so used to being bombarded with new and even more amazing visual effects, that it's easy to forget how gobsmacking Star Wars was to film audiences at the time. After all, it looks positively primitive by current standards - I doubt that any youngster reared on the eye-boggling delights of Jurassic Park and Terminator 2 would perceive it as much more than quaint.

But for anyone past their teens the film is probably as deeply an ingrained part of their childhood memories as their first snog behind the bike sheds and the day they got their 'O'-Level results. There's arguably no other film that has touched the hearts and minds of so many people in so many countries across the world.

Even now, after over fifteen years, I can still clearly remember standing in line at my local flea-pit, eagerly waiting my turn to see this fantastic film that everybody was raving about. I can also recall staggering out afterwards, my imagination overloaded by visions of dogfighting starships, exploding planets and beautiful princesses (well, *I* thought she was beautiful - I was only eleven years old, you know).

And none are in a better position to capitalise on this fondness of Star Wars than LucasArts. As the company is actually a part of George Lucas' entertainment empire, it has privileged access to footage, technical blueprints and background material from all of the films. The strange thing is that it's only recently the

RED FIVE STANDING BY...

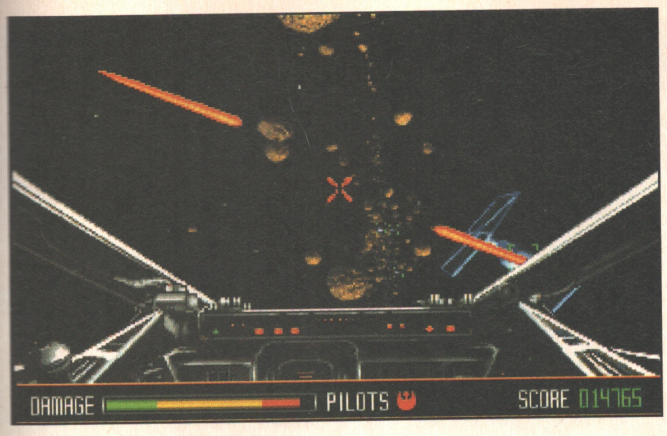
You're not alone in your struggle against the Empire. There's a whole host of airborne buddies who you'll meet along the way...

ROOKIE ONE

Er, this is you. Like Luke Skywalker, you come from the desert planet of Tatooine and are keen to help the Rebel Alliance fight the Empire. Although you're a pretty sharp civilian pilot, you're still a long way from being an ace fighter pilot. Some training is in order...

CMDR. RU MURLEEN

This sassy young miss is the youngest commander in the Rebel Alliance and is in charge of training the raw recruits. Like all good training camp bosses she's harsh but fair, although you can't help wishing she'd do something about that hair...



company has started to make use of that privilege.

First out of the trap was, of course, X-Wing, the superb space combat simulator that made up for what it lacked in graphic detail in sheer playability and atmosphere. And now we have Rebel Assault, the company's first attempt at a pure CD-based product, which promises to seamlessly blend arcade shoot-'em-up action with cinema-style presentation. Frontier aside, there's not been a more eagerly awaited game in a long time...

Rebel Assault casts you as a would-be Rebel star pilot and takes you all the way from rookie training on Tatooine, through a brief tour-of-duty on an ice planet hideaway and finally to active service at the Rebel HQ on Yavin. Each stage of the game is treated as a 'Chapter' in your on-going saga, each of which effectively translates into a game level.

Along the way, you'll fight swarms of TIE fighters, attack a Star Destroyer, negotiate asteroid fields, attempt to bring down a AT-AT Walker and finally fly a do-or-die strike run on the approaching Death Star, amongst many other things. Yes, you read it right - the Death Star. And you thought you destroyed it at the end of X-Wing, didn't you? (To be honest, I'm getting a bit sick attacking the Death Star - please LucasArts, let's have a new object of fear and hate in the next Star Wars game!)

It all sounds very exciting, doesn't it? But what's it like? Well, in a word, excellent. Here at What PC Games we reckon you can always judge how good a game is by the number of people who crowd into the games room to watch it when it's being played. And when Rebel Assault was in action the room was packed tighter than Mini full of elephants - it's that good.

Most of this excitement was generated by the graphics and sound which are, by and large, breath-taking. The graphics are a combination of original animations generated by a ray-tracing package and digitised clips from the real movies. And while the ray-traced stuff is excellent, the digitised images are less impressive, being grainy and blotchy - they look like they were taken from a dusty old video that had been left under a strong magnet for five months.

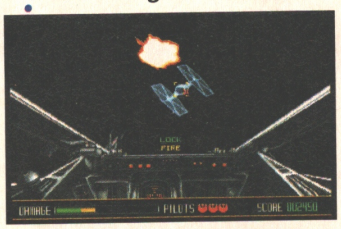
Looking at the screenshots on the pages here you may find the 'blocky effect' on some of the 3D backgrounds a bit ugly. These are no doubt a side-effect of only being able to access 150K of data per second from the CD-ROM drive - it's impos-

● (Above) Beware! Here be asteroids! Not only do you have to dodge or blast the tumbling rocks, you also have TIEs to deal with.

● (Below) Here you are on your very first training mission. Your task? Fly through the canyon, avoid the walls and duck under any bridges. It's a piece of cake compared to what comes later.

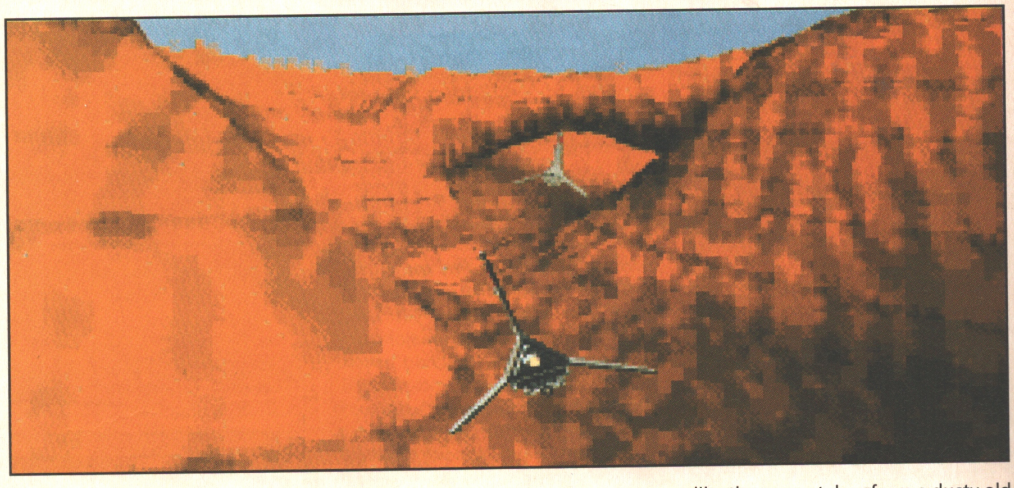
IT'S A BIT LIKE...

While playing Rebel Assault I was constantly reminded of an old Cinemaware game from five years ago called Rocket Ranger. Like Rebel Assault it consisted of a series of simple but enjoyable mini-games joined together by cinematic sequences. Obviously Rocket Ranger isn't a patch on Rebel Assault in terms of presentation - the game only came on two floppies! - but it did have a small but telling strategy element binding the sub-games together which made it more absorbing than, by rights, it should've been. And depth is something Rebel Assault really lacks. But who cares?



Rebel Assault...

...Rocket Ranger for the 90s?



CMDR. JAKE FARRELL

A pilot who flew for the Republic in the 'good old days', this gruff so-and-so has come out of retirement to help the Alliance. Although a superb tutor, he's not much of a laugh and doesn't take kindly to youngsters trying to show off their flying skills...

LT. TURLAND HACK

A friend of yours from Mos Eisley, Hack's job is manning the communication post at the Alliance's Dantooine base. Without wishing to give too much away, it's not a good idea to get too attached to Hack, as he snuffs it fairly early on in the story...

CAPT. MERRICK SIMMS

This cool customer is the leader of Blue Squadron. Although young he has a string of impressive combat victories under his belt that earned him his stripes faster than almost else in the Alliance. He's a stickler for discipline, by the way, so no messing about...

ROOKIE HARRIS

The son of a famed Rebel captain, Harris is very aware that he has a lot to live up to - and is failing. Although a decent enough pilot, he lacks confidence and control. What's the betting he doesn't make it through to the end credits?

sible to pull TV quality animations off a CD without a special decompression chip. The quality of these graphics don't affect the game one bit, however - believe me, when you're playing everything happens so fast that the scenery whizzes by at a blur anyway. In fact, the fragmented images even help accentuate the impression of speed.

The use of sound is as impressive as the graphics. The pilots chatter to each other anxiously in their usual way (you can select to play as either a male or a female pilot and your 'game voice' will sound different accordingly, which is a nice touch), the sound effects are spot on and musical themes taken directly from the film's orchestral soundtrack counterpoint the action perfectly. If I wanted to niggle I could complain that LucasArts have (no doubt due to contractual problems) brought in different actors to redo the voices of Darth Vader and C-3P0, but that's a minor fault and only the die-hard Star Wars nut will really find it a problem.

Of course, it's all very well the graphics and sound being great but that means nothing if the game itself is crap - if that was the case you might as well buy the trilogy on video (it'd be a damn sight cheaper, that's for sure). Fortunately the game is fine.

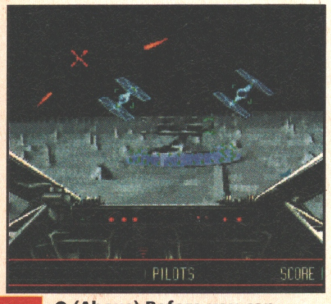
It's not the deepest or most complex of games ever, true. Basically each 'Chapter' presents you with some sort of 3D shoot-'em-up challenge, with the action typically viewed from either your current fighter's cockpit or from behind the ship - a sort of 'chase plane' view. In both cases the aim is the same - shoot the enemy's fighters, gun turrets or whatever while avoiding their return fire and not crashing into anything.

Since the 3D backgrounds are basically animated sequences read off the CD, the amount of freedom of movement you have is limited. This is fairly bearable in the 'chase plane' view levels as these generally take place in a canyon or similar, so your movement is restricted anyway. However, when in the cockpit this lack of real manoeuvrability can get annoying - although you can 'jiggle' the ship around the pre-set flight path to a certain extent you can't alter the course in any major way.

That said, some levels do have a sort of 'maze' element, most noticeably the level where you're chasing a probe droid inside some caves, in that at certain points along the flight path you're given the choice of detouring off down another route. These levels make you feel like you're a little more in charge of your destiny but not much.

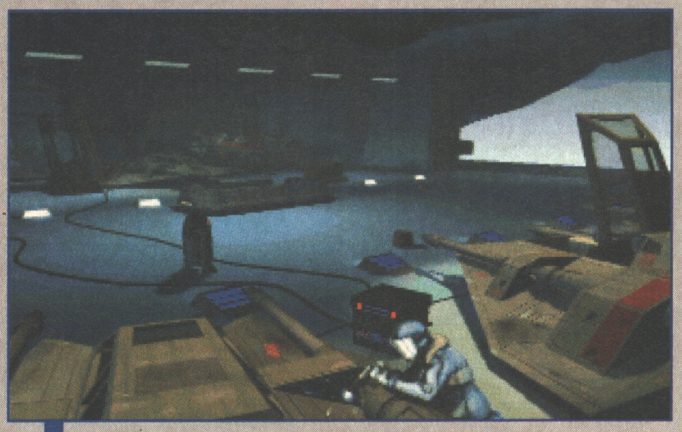
But, to be fair, I'm starting to criticise Rebel Assault for not being something that it was never intended to be in the first place. Rebel Assault is not meant to be an X-Wing beater, it's simply an arcade game. And judging it on those terms Rebel Assault scores highly - it's very playable, fast (after a playing session it's not uncommon to stagger away from your PC feeling a little nauseous), good looking, great sounding and there's barely any brain work required at all. In other words, it's everything that a good arcade game should be.

The icing on the cake, however, is the Star Wars atmosphere. LucasArts have obviously spent a lot of time getting that authentic movie feel - even the screen dissolves are copied from the films - and that's paid off handsomely. It really does feel like you're taking part in one of the



● (Above) Before you can make the final attack on the Death Star trench, you have to take out this gun turret by shooting away the mounting.

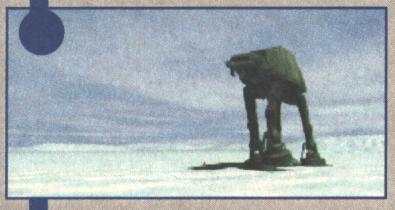
CHILLIN' ON THE ICE PLANET



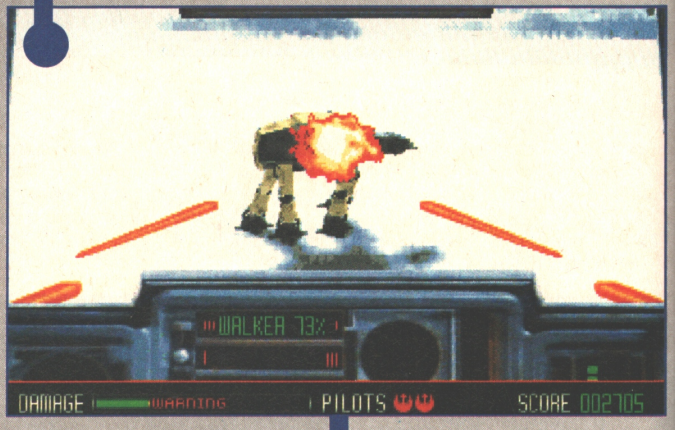
(Left) A cold, frosty morning at the Rebel's ice planet base. Actually, every morning is cold and frosty here so no need of a weatherman. The perimeter sensors have detected what could be an Imperial Probe droid severa; kilometres from the base and the big cheeses decide to send you to investigate...

(Below) At last - some game. Your job here is to navigate your way through the tight caverns, zapping any Probe droids you come across. Occasionally the cave splits into two branches and you get to choose your next path - one branch leads to the next stage and eventual freedom while the other loops you back around again...

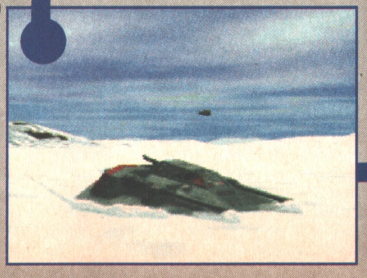
(Above) After a bit of scouting you spot the mysterious intruder. And indeed, it is a Probe droid. No sooner have you spotted it than it dives into a conveniently nearby cave. Gunning your Snowspeeder's engines you give chase in an attempt to blast it down before it can transmit a message to its masters..



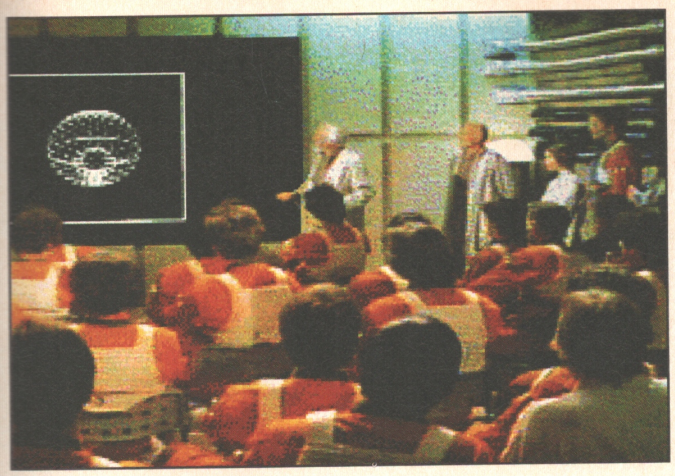
(Left) You did your best but it was all in vain - the Probe had already transmitted its data back to Lord Vader and the Imperial assault has begun. Due to the shields over the base an aerial attack is impossible, so the bad guys send in AT-AT Walkers to sort the rebel scum out...

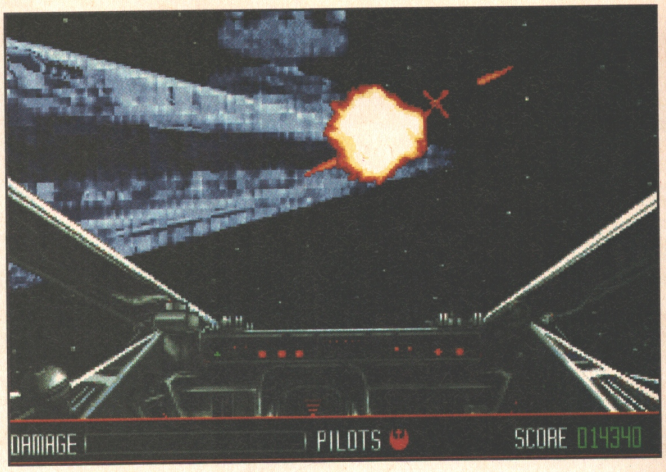


(Above) In your Snowspeeder you fly around the Walker, shooting its various body sections until it gives up the ghost. Your flight path is controlled by the game, but you get the option here and there to choose alternative attack routes...



(Right) You brought down the Walker but your damaged 'speeder conks out, stranding you. The Rebels are already preparing to evacuate so you've got to peg it home to your base ASAP...





● (Above left) Every so often you get treated to animated clips taken from the movie. Bit rough looking, aren't they?

● (Above) More blasting antics, this time starring you in your X-Wing taking on a Star Destroyer

movies. It's fair to say that if the game came from somebody else and didn't feature the Star Wars characters, vehicles and music then it wouldn't be half as enjoyable it is, but it does so there.

So, we've established that Rebel Assault is brilliant. Trouble is, like a firework, the brilliance is very short-lived. Yup, I'm afraid we've arrived at Rebel Assault's only real (but still very serious) failing - it's just too damn easy to complete. Now I don't consider myself to be much more than an above-average gamesplayer - you certainly wouldn't find me queuing to give Combat Cal a pasting on Games World - but even I managed to get through the game in under three days and that was on the 'Normal' difficulty setting. Playing it on 'Hard' improves things a bit but I still don't reckon there's much more than a solid week's play here. And at a penny under fifty quid, you've got to ask yourself whether it's really worth all that cash for such little, albeit very enjoyable, return.

"Surely Rebel Assault should get severely marked down for its briefness?" you're thinking. Well, yes, but this is my review and my personal opinion. If asked whether I'd recommend Rebel Assault I'd say 'Yes' without a flicker of doubt - assuming that the person asking was even remotely interested in Star Wars and, of course, had fifty quid to burn.

Agreed, Rebel Assault IS too easy but it's a game that I think I'd return to from time to time, either to try an up a high-score or more likely just to enjoy the experience of playing, much like the way I watch Star Wars again every so often just for the pleasure of it.

Then there's the 'history' aspect. Rebel Assault is the first game I've ever seen that can truly be described without embarrassment as an 'interactive movie', a much-maligned term that's been applied to just about every game that's appeared in the last three years. It certainly points the way ahead as far as CD-ROM games go. And so Rebel Assault is worth buying for that reason alone.

Of course, the possibilities for the future are very exciting as far as PC-owning Star Wars fans are concerned. After all, George Lucas is about to start production of three new Star Wars films, which will be prequels to the first trilogy explaining how the Republic lost power to the dark forces of the Empire.

Now how about if LucasArts took footage from those films and intercut it with specially filmed sequences and game sections, so that you could actually watch the film and then, through your games-playing efforts, affect its course at key points in the narrative? Interesting, eh? LucasArts haven't announced anything along those lines yet, but I wouldn't be surprised if they're treating Rebel Assault as a 'dry run' for that sort of game tie-in in the near future. From here, the only way is up...

REBEL ASSAULT

US Gold/LucasArts
(021) 625 3388
£49.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 33Mhz 386 with 2Mb of memory, VGA and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib, Soundblaster and Roland soundcards; a joystick; a mouse.

THE GOOD...

- Arcade action has never been faster, more furious or more fun.
- The in-game graphics and the animated sequences are mind-blowing.
- Superb film-like atmosphere sweeps you away.

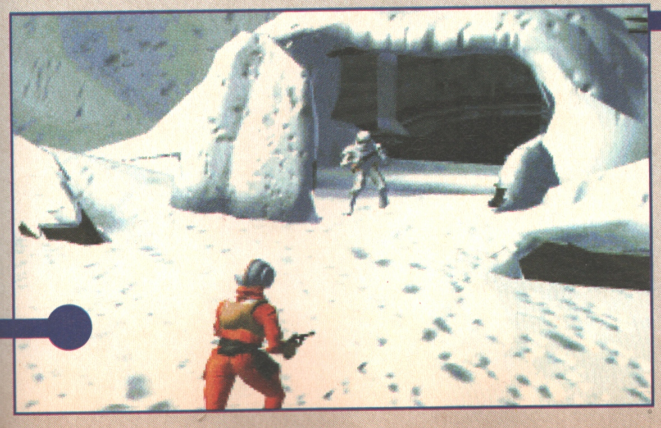
...AND THE BAD

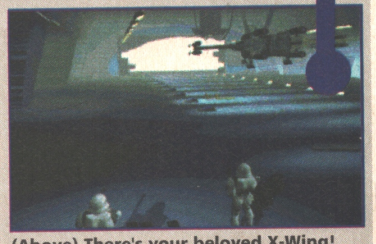
- Brilliant as Rebel Assault is it's all over far too quickly.
- Some of the digitisation leaves a lot to be desired.

OVERALL 92%

(Below) Hello? Anybody home? Looks like everyone's already made good their escape... Uh-oh - Imperial stormtroopers! The Empire has already infiltrated the base, so you're going to have to be extra careful on your way to the hangar where you'll find your X-Wing shaped ticket out of danger...

(Right) As you run through the caverns you're occasionally ambushed by stormtroopers. Your actions are restricted to shuffling left and right and, of course, returning fire with your blaster. There's a maze element too, as you get to choose your path through the base...





(Above) There's your beloved X-Wing! Quickly jumping into the cockpit you prepare for it take-off. As your ship glides out of the hangar bay entrance there's nothing for the Imperial Stormtroopers to do but look on. Chalk another victory up to Rookie One...

TFX

● (Top) The sleek EFA prepares for take off. Every mission begins with you on an airstrip or carrier deck.

● (Above) The external camera views allow you to look at your craft from just about any angle.

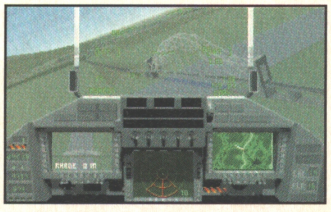
Dean Evans clips down his visor and takes to the skies in the stunning flight sim from 3D specialist, Digital Image Design.

If you dream of flying a sleek, fast jet fighter your options are severely limited. You've got the choice between either joining the RAF and spending years training to be a pilot or, on the other hand, popping down to your friendly local arms dealer and buying your own 'plane - assuming you happen to have roughly £23 million in small change lying about.

But if you're impatient like me or you haven't got enough cash to buy a round of drinks let alone a state-of-the-art fighter/bomber, it's comforting to know that buying a copy of DID's flight sim TFX will let you command and fly one of three top-of-the-range supersonic aircraft - either the European Fighter Aircraft (EFA), the F-22 Superstar or the F-117 Stealth Fighter. Even better, it'll cost you roughly £22,999,960 and one penny less than the real thing.

TFX is set in the near future, at a time when civil wars still rage across the globe from Somalia to Libya and from the former Yugoslavia to Colombia. After years of debate, the UN have finally had the nerve to send in the troops, realising that if you want to get everybody's undivided attention at the negotiating table then you've first got to drop laser-guided bombs down their chimneys.

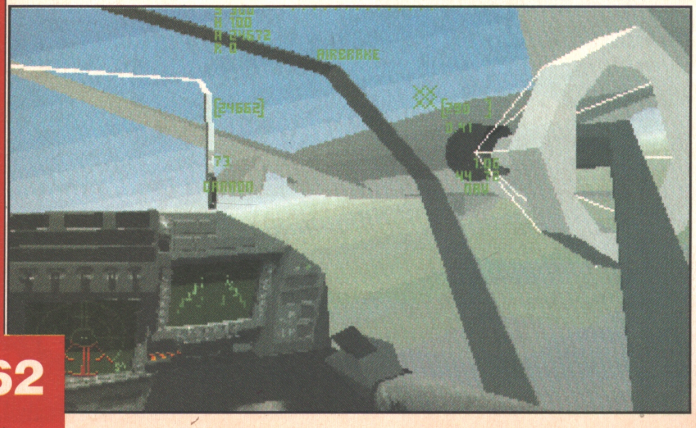
So, yes, TFX is another flight sim and yes, as usual, you get to dogfight, bomb buildings and land on aircraft carriers. So what makes TFX stand out from the crowd? Well, for a start it's incredibly playable - you can, if you so wish, ignore the manual entirely and be up in the air immediately, barrel rolling and shooting as if you'd been born in the cockpit. Better still than that, though, is the game's design and wealth of options, making it accessible and appealing to just about any type of games-player.



If you fancy a duck shoot the Arcade option offers no-frills shoot-'em-up action, while at the other end of the scale UN Commander allows you to design and fly your own missions. Best of all is Flash Points, a vast campaign that intersperses the missions with various 'soap opera' style features including cut-scenes, animated mission briefings and UN television reports.

But what really makes you stop and drool embarrassingly over the carpet is TFX's fast and accurate 3D graphics technology, which incorporates just about every graphical innovation of recent years including Gouraud shading, texture mapping and a padlock view. The graphic detail is quite superb, proving that if you have a good 3D engine you don't have to sacrifice detail for variety. That said, you still really need a decent 486 to get maximum enjoyment out of the game.

In TFX you definitely get the best of all worlds. Like Strike Commander TFX has terrific graphics and sound and like Tornado it boasts a vast amount of detail and realism. In fact, TFX scores highly in just about every area imaginable, making it the best all-round flight sim on the market today.



● (Above left) A nice, quiet Colombian bridge two seconds before two Maverick missiles reduce it to a pile of smouldering scrap metal.

● (Left) The 'padlock' view allows you to scan around the cockpit at will, making it incredibly easy to seek out and track targets - or even line up on the refueling pipe as here.

TFX

Ocean/DID

(061) 832 6633

£39.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 486 PC with 2Mb of memory, VGA and 12Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards; a mouse; a joystick.

THE GOOD...

- Readily accessible to pilots of all abilities.
- Sets new standards of visual and aural presentation.
- It's Strike Commander with realism or Falcon 3.0 with laughs.

...AND THE BAD

- A very fast PC is really needed to do it justice.

OVERALL 93%

WHEN THE STREET JUST AIN'T TOUGH ENOUGH...

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Just as Gandalf the Grey transformed into the even mightier Gandalf the White in Lord Of The Rings, so the White Wizard has metamorphosed into Steve Cooke. Just the bloke to review Origin's shapechanging odyssey, then.

SHAD

Just imagine what might happen if a bunch of world-class programmers came up with a stonking great block-buster of a game, bristling with new 3D technologies, and then plonked the whole lot into the public domain. You and I would get thirty quids worth of software for nothing, and the rest of the development community would be up in arms.

They wouldn't be, of course. They'd be stuck in front of their dis-assemblers, scanning through the code like crazy and wondering how they can use it in their own games. And suddenly everyone would be producing similar titles. Not, I hasten to add, that they would actually be stealing code but seeing (a) that it was possible and (b) how it was done is going to put a tiger in the tank of any new game style.

Something like that happened with Wolfenstein 3D. Its detailed first-person perspective 3D display was innovative and popular; it was also in the public domain. Similar products have now sprung up all over the place. The Ultima Underworld series is the best known example and Shadowcaster, from the same company, is one of the latest.

Cast as the last survivor of a race of shapechangers (cue morphing routine), you have to slip in and out of different physical identities as you bash your way through various mazes in pursuit of the evil Veste. The gameplay attempts to blend adventure-style exploration and puzzle-solving with RPG-style characterisation and Kung Fu.

The justification for creating such a gallimaufry of game-styles isn't hard to find; Shadowcaster is meant to be 'accessible'. RPGs, you see, are 'inaccessible'. This marketing-speak sounds reasonable at first. RPGs do have complex structures involving character and storyline. They don't sell in large numbers to people who think gameplay means supergluing your thumb to the firing button.

You could say the same about James Joyce. He is not much read by those who pore over News of the World. But this doesn't mean that Joyce has an accessibility problem, and it certainly doesn't mean that mixing extracts from Portrait of An Artist with pictures of Oprah Winfrey at WeightWatchers is going to be a cast-iron commercial success. The Booker you might win, but not readers.

Shadowcaster has tried to create mass appeal by being jack-of-all-games, but hasn't succeeded. This is the sort of thing you'll get up to: Zoom along corridor; change into cat shape; use cat-vision to avoid trap; monster appears; bash it several times till it dies; change into human form to regenerate power levels; pick up magic doofus; rush around maze plonking doofus on various pillars, statues, keyholes etc to see if it does anything; succeed in opening door to new area; zoom along corridor; change into...

You will soon be bored. The exploration side is fine because the graphics in Shadowcaster are excellent and the different 'worlds' well designed. You get underground lake levels (with giant bats hanging from the cavern roof); foggy levels with skeletons; Aztec-style temple levels and so on, plus an auto-mapping function to keep track of it all. Some of these locations, which you can explore at very high speed and satisfying smoothness, have considerable graphic 'wow' factor. Different metaforms can explore different environments: the underwater ones are the best.

Exploration, however, loses its interest once you've explored. Then you want to solve puzzles, get involved with other creatures, have a chat, use your massive brain. At this point the game falls flat on its face.

Take puzzle solving, for example. In Shadowcaster it consists of finding objects and then testing them out on (which often just means putting them on) other objects. Gameplay of this calibre is positively Jurassic. It harks from the days when programs lived in 16K and could only interpret very simple commands, so 'puzzles' were really trial-and-error procedures involving static objects and your efforts to find out what they did.

Good game designers abandoned artefact-oriented puzzles in the mid-80s in favour of character-based alternatives. Origin themselves led the way in this area with the Ultima

● (Above) As you can see, the 3D graphics in Shadowcaster are just beautiful - and they move incredibly smoothly.

● You get to fight some weird 'uns in Shadowcaster. How about this reject from Little Shop Of Horrors?

WHERE TO FIND THE MASKS!

One of the puzzles involves finding four masks. Let's go get mask number one...

Your progress is blocked by poisonous mud. You'll have to swim through it at high speed to reach the other side before you die.

Cross this corridor and you'll be killed by fireballs. So, switch to Maorin (inset) and use its infrared vision to spot the trigger points on the floor.

On the way here you found the Ninja's favourite weapon - a shuriken. Chuck it at the suspended object to dowse the flames...

Now kill the monsters. Easy. Then tootle off. The mask is now waiting for you to find somewhere in the maze ahead.

SHADOWCASTER

games, where chatting, exploration, logic and character development all contributed to your experience. So it's even more surprising to see them coming up with this twaddle. An encounter with an interactive character or two could have transformed Shadowcaster into something far more compelling.

So what about the combat? Simple. Rush up to a beast and clobber it. Or use some weapon or feature of the 'metaform' you currently inhabit. Keep it up till the beast pops its clogs. Then on to the next one.

This may all sound dire, but you shouldn't underestimate the power of great graphics, slick movement controls (which have you zooming all over the place) and decent sound to dress up a turkey for Christmas. You'll keep going back to Shadowcaster, but then arises the second major drawback: keep going back and you find you'll finish the game sooner than you'd like. There really isn't a lot here for experienced players.

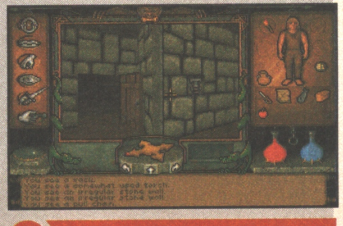
That's a big problem. If you've got a simple game structure like this one, expert players may be fobbed off with extended gameplay but they won't get that here. Novice players won't be happy either; the repetitive gameplay galls even more if you're making slow progress.

So what have you got? Some good coding, beautiful scenery, excellent movement control, one good idea (shapechanging) and not much more. Buy Ultima Underworld I or II instead, or investigate Doom (from the same people who did Wolfenstein).

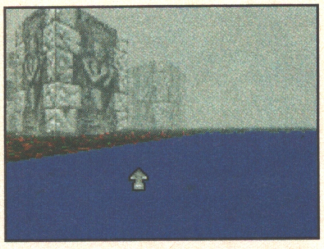
IT'S A BIT LIKE...

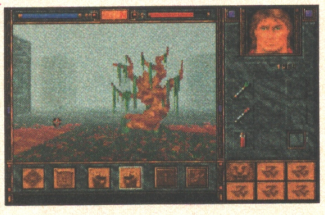
There are no prizes for spotting that, superficially anyway, Shadowcaster is a bit like the Ultima Underworld games. But whereas the Underworld games have some depth and substance to back up their stunning 3D visuals, Shadowcaster has barely any - the puzzles are simplistic in the extreme and the character interaction is non-existent. If you're looking for a slick but ultimately unsatisfying slash-'em-up then you might want to try Shadowcaster. If not, leave well alone.

Shadowcaster...



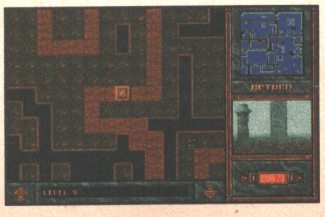
...Ultima Underworld





● (Above) See that fog effect - lovely, isn't it? Shadowcaster is full of neat touches like that.

● (Below) Shadowcaster includes the now-obligatory auto-mapping facility which, while anathema to old dungeoneers, is a boon to the first-time novice.



SHADOWCASTER

Origin/Raven Software
(0753) 549442
£44.95 Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 33Mhz 386, VGA and 17Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards; a mouse.

THE GOOD...

- Rush around atmospheric locations, see monsters, bash them up.
- Change shape and go swimming, flying and stomping about.

...AND THE BAD

- Repetitive gameplay soon palls.
- Not enough levels to challenge the experts, not enough variation to encourage the novice

OVERALL 51%

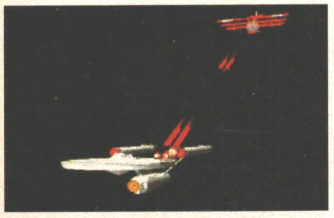
STAR TREK JUDGMENT

David Upchurch boldly goes where no man has gone before (and we're not talking about the women's toilets) with Interplay's newie.

It's very easy to laugh at Trekkies, Trekkers, Trackers (hang on, that's a chocolate bar isn't it?) or whatever Star Trek fans call themselves these days, isn't it? Especially when they insist on getting together at 'conventions', wearing plastic pointy ears, making peculiar hand signals and saying naff things like "Live long and prosper". "Haven't these sad types got real lives to be getting on with?" people sigh.

But let's be honest - we're all Star Trek fans to some degree. Should the subject of Star Trek arise in the pub or at a party then you can be sure that, after everyone's stopped mocking its terrible acting, wobbly cardboard sets, sad men-in-suit monsters and pathetic special effects, they'll start to get all misty-eyed and nostalgic about, ooh you remember, that episode where Spock had to operate on his own brain. Or was it McCoy? Or the one where the Enterprise got swallowed up by the spaceship that looked like a big dog turd? Etc, etc.

Yup, there's no getting away from the fact that Star Trek has become an ingrained part of our modern culture. And while this may be bad news as far as pompous intellectual types are concerned, it's great news for Interplay as they've acquired the rights from Paramount to produce games based around this internationally popular TV show. The first fruit of this agreement was Star Trek: The 25th Anniversary which appeared well over a year ago, and it looks likely the company will repeat that success with this sequel, Star Trek: Judgment Rites.



● Dust off the phasers 'cos it's time for some space combat! It's simple stuff but even so you can bypass these sections if fighting ain't your scene. And don't ask why you're being attacked by a triplane, pur-leeze...

As before, the game is split into eight, self-contained 'episodes', each consisting of a healthy dollop of LucasArts/Sierra-style graphic adventuring blended with a dash of arcade space combat against the Klingons, Romulans, Elasi and all those other bizarrely-named enemies of the Federation. However, while all the episodes in The 25th Anniversary were completely unrelated, this time there's a linking plot running through them.

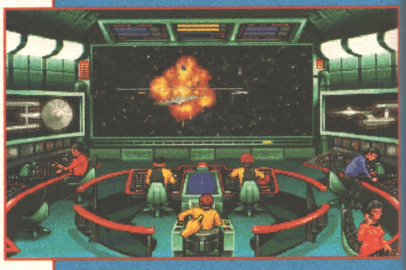
Lurking in the depths of space is a vastly-powerful alien race called the Brassica (or the Broccoli, as certain members of the What PC Games staff insist on calling them). For millennia they've hidden themselves away, their existence a secret. Now, and for reasons known only to themselves, they've decided reveal themselves by setting bizarre tests of courage and intelligence for the various races travelling the spaceways. Inevitably, Kirk and his crew are selected by the Brocco... er... Brassica to take part. The only trouble is, should they fail the Enterprise could face destruction...

It's a familiar, very Star Trek sort of plot. And, to a degree, familiarity is one of the Judgment Rites' greatest strengths. As soon as you load up you're treated to the strains of the TV show's famous theme tune, along with William 'Kirk' Shatner reciting the famous "Space. The final frontier..." monologue over the top. Everything looks and sounds like it ought to and everybody talks and behaves in their usual manner - Spock and McCoy even bicker with each other occasionally, just like they always used to (although there are times when you wish they'd shut up so that you can just get on with the game).

FASCINATING, CAPTAIN...

And now on BBC 2 it's time once again to boldy go where no man has go before with Captain Kirk and the crew of the Enterprise in this week's episode of... Star Trek!

Captain's Log, Stardate 24103.2: During a routine survery mission we have encountered the shattered remains of the U.S.S. Alexander. The ship's Captain transmitted a brief, garbled message to us just seconds before his vessel dramatically exploded, a message warning of a huge threat to the whole Federation. I have decided to change course and investigate.



By reverse-plotting the Alexander's course, Spock has calculated that the Alexander's port-of-call was the Espoir Research Station in the Omega Maelstrom system. No sooner had we arrived, however, than the Enterprise was attacked by Elasi pirates. Fortunately, they were no match for Chekov's talents at the weapons' desk.

Having rendezvoused with Espoir Station, Spock, McCoy and myself have beamed aboard in the hope of finding some clues as to what this mysterious threat to the Federation is. We discovered more than we bargained for - Breddell, an insane genius with a grudge against the Federation, is using the station's research work to develop a doomsday device.

Despite our bravest efforts, Breddell's legion of giant-sized goons have over-powered us and thrown us into the station's brig. Although we have been stripped of all our equipment, somehow we must find a way out of this cold prison so that we can warn the Federation of the impending danger. Once again, the lives of billions depend on us...

TRITES

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Actually, as mentioned in the main review Star Trek: Judgment Rites is a lot like Star Trek: The 25th Anniversary. Despite the game's improved graphics and space combat routines and a few other minor refinements here and there, it effectively amounts to little more than a set of 'extra missions'. While not exactly a bad thing - the game is still great fun to play - it's likely to disappoint those hoping that Interplay were going to try a new approach to the Star Trek legend. Maybe next time, eh?

● The action icon panel can be called up at any time and allows you to do typical adventuring things such as examine, pick up or use objects. You can also talk to the characters you meet, whereupon a list of multiple-choice questions and/or answers appear and you then select the one you feel is most appropriate.

Trouble is, this familiarity extends to the gameplay as well - at least it will to anyone who's played The 25th Anniversary, as it's essentially the same formula as before but with a few tweaks here and there. And because of this it shares some of the first game's shortcomings.

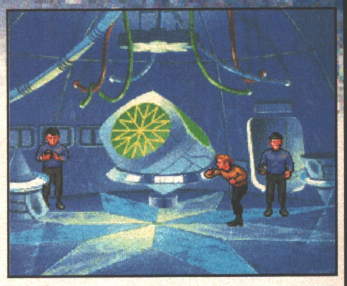
The graphic adventuring side of things is still a little weak at times. Since each episode is a self-contained mini-adventure that means there are only so many locations to visit and objects to collect. This means that should you get stuck it's relatively easy to just experiment with everything in your inventory until you hit the jackpot. Okay, so you can do this in any graphic adventure but because your options in Judgement Rites are smaller it becomes a more tempting option if you're not making progress.

I also got a little annoyed with the way the conversations you have with the game characters sometimes take on a life of their own. For example, in an early episode Kirk has to persuade two warring lifeforms to make up and be friends. So you go and chat to each of the opposing parties and, after a couple of opportunities to say things, the game takes over control of the conversation and - bang! - before you know it everyone's chums and inviting each other to their parties. Although this doesn't happen so much later in the game it still rankles.

The most obvious are in the space combat sections. For a start, you can now 'lock on' to targets, so you don't have to chase them all over the heavens with your crosshair, and can call up other views - rear and side, for example. And if you're not too keen on arcade action you can also make the combat easier or turn it off altogether, allowing you to concentrate on the adventuring.

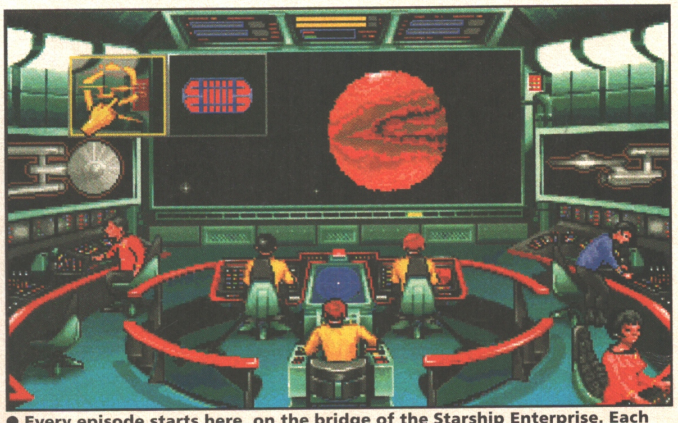
Despite the aforementioned moans, I liked Star Trek: Judgment Rites a lot. Although the adventuring isn't as challenging or as fun as, say, Day Of The Tentacle's and the space combat amounts to little more than sub-standard Wing Commander, it has enough atmosphere thanks to its famous characters and settings to make it very enjoyable. It won't keep you playing for months, admittedly, but while you do you'll have a great time. Even so, I hope that with Starfleet Academy, the next Star Trek game, Interplay try to do something *really* different.

This is the *old* Trek game...



...and this is the *new* one!

● (Below) When you beam onto a planet or a spacestation the game will automatically pick a landing party for you, typically consisting of Spock, McCoy and, occasionally, either Scotty, Uhura, Chekov, Sulu or A.N. Other. As you explore you can call on each team member's advice and talents - Spock's scientific and McCoy's medical, mainly - to help solve the problems you encounter.



● Every episode starts here, on the bridge of the Starship Enterprise. Each character on the bridge is responsible for certain functions, like arming the weapons or putting the ship into orbit, and it's up to you, as Kirk, to tell them what to do and when to do it.

STAR TREK: JUDGMENT RITES

Interplay/In-house
(0865) 390029
£TBA Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 25MHz 386 PC with 2Mb of memory, VGA and 20Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards; a mouse.

THE GOOD...
- Captures the feel of the Star Trek universe well.
- All your favourite characters are here!
- The overall plot is intriguing.

...AND THE BAD
- Not that different to the first Trek game.
- A little too easy to complete.

OVERALL 85%

SUBWAR 2050

In the year 2050 huge corporations fight for mining rights under the oceans. Fearing nothing, Dean Evans strips down to his shorts, straps on his snorkel and dips his toe in the Atlantic with a copy of MicroProse's Subwar.

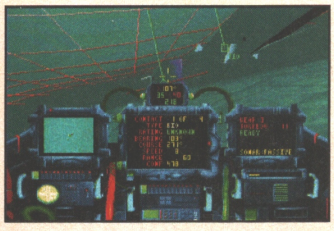
Have you ever seen any of those old World War Two submarine movies? These classic black-and-white movies were packed with submarine cliches - fast-cutting close-ups of crewmembers listening to the sonar ping, sweat rolling down oil-stained cheeks, the creak of the metal hull, depth charges exploding, sixteen pipes suddenly rupturing simultaneously and who can forget the tears of the fat engineer who was always the last to escape from the terror of the flooding torpedo room?

Sadly though, none of the above scrape even the briefest of appearances in Subwar 2050 because here there's no sitting on the seabed, no U-Boats and no periscopes. MicroProse have taken a few ounces of flight sim, a sprig of submarine adventure and a small dash of SeaQuest DSV, put it all in the microwave and, after roasting it for about a year and a half, have cooked up Subwar 2050, an undersea combat sim that takes a refreshing new look at the age-old underwater theme.

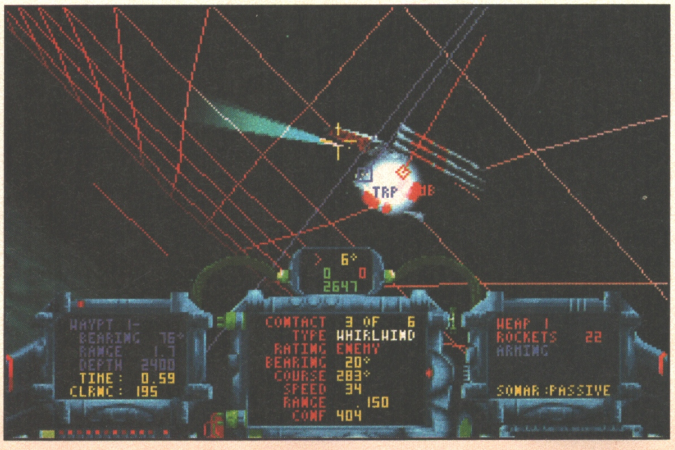
The story goes something like this: it's the year 2050, and you are a freelance submarine pilot who has just been hired by a large, grey and potentially world-dominating corporation. As mineral resources have become scarce, mining has begun on the ocean floor itself. And with huge profits to be made, the corporations will do anything to get a bigger slice of the action. So why not steal all your neighbour's whales? Or maybe you'd like to drop a friendly atomic charge on the roof of your enemy's corporate HQ? $50,000 okay? Deal.

All these things are possible because in Subwar you control a high-tech fighter submarine and, from your base on a mothership, the corporation pays you large amounts of money to take on a variety of missions. These can range from simple reconnaissance patrols to covert demolitions, but all end up with you duelling other subs in frantic underwater battles over a stunning texture-mapped seascape.

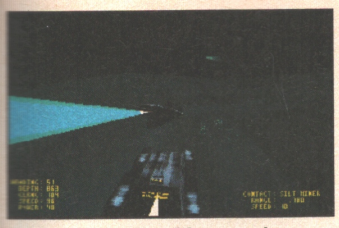
And 'stunning' is an apt word for Subwar because nobody has done an underwater game quite like this before. In the past submarine sims and adrenaline-pumping excitement have rarely been mentioned in the same breath because sub combat usually tends to involve a lot of waiting around and staring at bulkheads. Subwar, though, is a slap in the face and a poke in the eye for people who think that subs will always be boring.



● (Above) This is one of the more eco-friendly missions, where you have to rescue whales held prisoner in an enemy farm.



● (Right) A great shot showing off Subwar's lovely graphics. Who would've thought the sea bad could be so pretty?



● Flying propeller driven torches over a 3D landscape, duelling other torches and flying through green triangles. This is the very essence of Subwar.

have limited manoeuvrability and be blind to everything around them.

In Subwar you can actually 'see' the underwater world, and what a gorgeously presented world it is. If you've seen Spielberg's SeaQuest DSV on the TV you'll know the kind of look I'm talking about. In the deepest waters, fighter subs climb and dive in midnight blackness, spotlights pierce the icy gloom, bubbles flow off texture-mapped hulls. It all looks absolutely superb; like a moist Bladerunner perhaps or a hard-edged Stingray; totally mean, utterly moody and very, very dark.

Subwar has a positive plethora of options too. There are four separate campaigns to choose from that take you from the sub-zero temperatures of the Arctic to the crowded sea floor off the coast of Japan. Each scenario sees you employed by a different corporation and contains nine or ten missions that get harder and harder as you progress. Before each mission you can also configure your sub's weaponry. If you want more speed, for example, choose light dumb-fire rockets over the heavier homing torpedoes. For security stock up on decoys and don't forget to load the transponders if you have to lure whales from their farms.

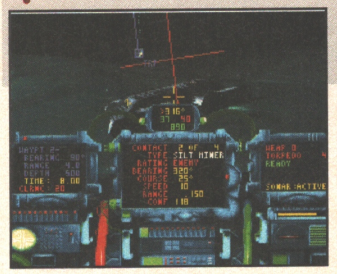
All in all Subwar 2050 is a highly impressive game. Apart from its superb graphics and involving gameplay, here is a game that's even more polished than my mum's coffee table on a Sunday afternoon. I say this because it comes packaged with a small book called 'Under Currents', a sub pilot magazine that features combat tactics, company ads, a history of the submarine industry and even a personal column. It adds a whole lot more atmosphere to Subwar, and if I have one message to MicroProse apart from 'Nice one guys' it is that they should do things like 'Under Currents' more often.

My only misgiving is the fact that the missions might get too similar the further you progress. Although they are very varied (lure whales away from a whale farm, drop a colourant in a fish farm to make them inedible, destroy mining vehicles and so on) the gameplay is essentially the same throughout. I suspect it might get a little dull later on but, as I haven't got that far yet, it's hard to say. Remember flight sims and even just about space sim repeat the same mission formula, so this is probably a minor concern.

Subwar is much more than just a 'flight sim under the sea', it creates a whole new genre, mixing strategy and fast, frenzied gameplay in varying shades of turquoise and green. With a variety of missions and campaigns, Subwar is a refreshing shift away from the usual sub game, invoking memories of movies like Leviathan and The Abyss. It's also frustratingly difficult and if you're fed up with planes and bored stiff with spaceships, why not grab your coat and scarf and go check out Subwar. You get all the beneifits of underwater action and you don't ever get wet. Marvellous.

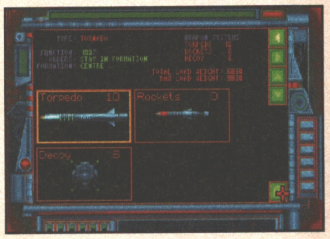
IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Difficult one this, because there's really nothing around that compares with Subwar. It'll probably be compared to a flight sim because it boasts many of the same features (including external views). But the more I think about it the more I feel that Subwar is cast in the old Wing Commander mould, with it's similar waypoint structure, motherships and texture-mapped combat. So have MicroProse created a new genre? We'll just have to wait and see.



Subwar could almost be...

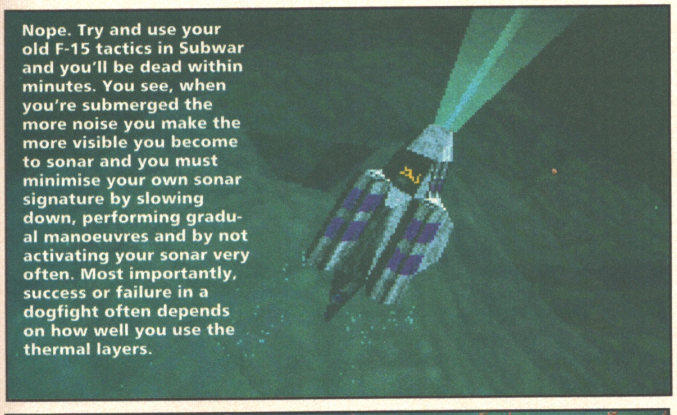
...wet Wing Commander!



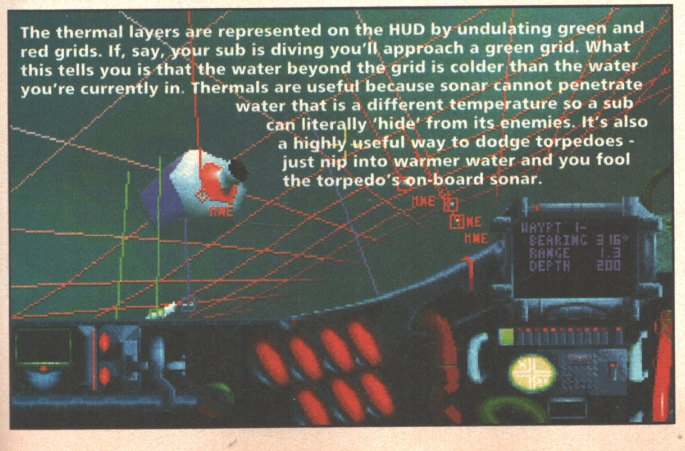
● (Top) There are four Campaigns to choose between, each with nine individual missions. It'll take you quite a while to finish them all...

● (Above) Before each mission you get to choose your weapon payload - just like any normal airborne sim!

ISN'T IT JUST A FLIGHT SIM UNDERWATER?



Nope. Try and use your old F-15 tactics in Subwar and you'll be dead within minutes. You see, when you're submerged the more noise you make the more visible you become to sonar and you must minimise your own sonar signature by slowing down, performing gradual manoeuvres and by not activating your sonar very often. Most importantly, success or failure in a dogfight often depends on how well you use the thermal layers.



The thermal layers are represented on the HUD by undulating green and red grids. If, say, your sub is diving you'll approach a green grid. What this tells you is that the water beyond the grid is colder than the water you're currently in. Thermals are useful because sonar cannot penetrate water that is a different temperature so a sub can literally 'hide' from its enemies. It's also a highly useful way to dodge torpedoes - just nip into warmer water and you fool the torpedo's on-board sonar.

SUBWAR 2050

Micropose/In-house

(0454) 326532

£44.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 486 PC with 2mb memory, VGA and14mb of hard disk

ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib, Soundblaster and Roland soundcards; a mouse; a joystick.

THE GOOD...

- A totally new type of game - dogfighting subs.
- A visually stunning, highly atmospheric gaming world.
- Superbly presented and very challenging.

...AND THE BAD

- For the full texture-mapped glory you need a fast PC.
- The gameplay could become repetitive.

OVERALL 90%

COSMIC SPACEHEAD

If the likes of Raymond Bradbury and his sci-fi author mates are to be believed, in the near future we'll all be jaunting to Venus and Saturn for our holidays. However, after his recent trip to the planet Linoleum, Steve Merrett thinks he'll stick to Benidorm next year...

Holidays can often be the source of real problems. According to some poll or other, going on holiday rates as one of the most stressful things a person can do - and when you consider that moving house and divorce are the only things above the nightmares of a get-away break, it makes you wonder why we do it. Still, little niggles like lost passports and missing luggage are small-fry compared to the traumas Codemasters' latest cutesy hero has got in store.

The eponymous Spacehead is a pointy-headed little jet-setter from the planet Linoleum who travels the galaxy in search of whatever souvenirs and tidbits he can bring back to show his mates. Despite this unlikely pastime, though, this arcade/adventure revolves around Spacey organising a jaunt to the mythical planet Earth in an attempt to show his doubting pals that it exists. Thus, guiding the little caped crusader around the game's many flick-screen locations, a series of puzzles stand between Spacehead and a visit to our little blue planet.

Cosmic Spacehead is a bit of a strange brew to say the least. In its original Megadrive form, it was released because the Sega machine is hardly inundated with point-'n'-click adventures like this. However, when you consider PC owners have access to the likes of Monkey Island 2 and Day Of The Tentacle, this rather dated-looking effort seems rather redundant.

● Spacehead's graphics are its best feature, being a unique blend of DOTT and Hanna-Barbera.

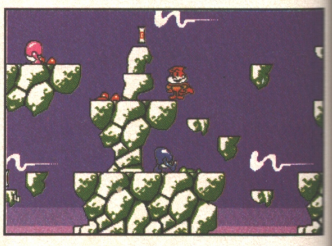
● Here you can see Spacehead's clumsy player interface - selecting those icons with a joystick is a real pain!

Using the joystick to move Spacey around each location, the game's object-related puzzles are introduced as Spacey adds numerous objects to his inventory. For instance, the player is left to organise the inter-galactic tourist's passport and this involves the normal trips to photo machines and passport offices - hardly taxing.

A stream of equally simple tasks follows as Spacey eventually makes his way towards Earth, but, in an attempt to add a little variety to the tedious 'action', the Codies have taken it upon themselves to include a platform section between zones - and what a primitive affair it is, too. Gone are the bum-bouncing advances made by the likes of The Addams Family or that little Mario guy; nope, this is basic platform fare at its very worst, with Spacey simply avoiding anything that comes his way as he strolls across the dull scrolling landscapes.

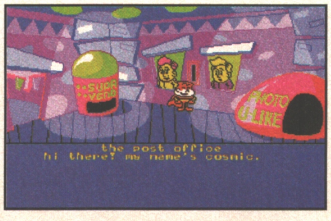
The trouble with Cosmic Spacehead is that it is just so dull and unoriginal. Graphically, it looks quite nice, and the programmers have created a Jetsons-style planet with the use of gaudy colour schemes and angled buildings and screens, but the all-important gameplay is so tired it could be carbon-dated back to the Spectrum era - displaying the game's origins within the Dizzy series, perchance?

There's very little interaction with the few characters Spacey meets on his travels, and the point-'n'-click system and the game's puzzles are so basic it defies belief. Granted, it looks like Codemasters have tried to add a little 'extra' with the platform scenes and a mini racer which has been lumped in, but the result is a game which falls between two stools - namely average and dated.



● While the plaftorm-based sections linking the major locations provide some respite from the mediocre adventuring, they're still pretty poor.

● Here's our hero outside the post office. If he's going to get up to any sight-seeing he's going to have to get a passport first. Don't worry though - it's not that difficult a problem to solve.



● Ah, we're IN the post office now. There's a photobooth - just find some cash and he can get a piccy.

COSMIC SPACEHEAD

Codemasters/In-house
(0926) 814132
£29.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 25MHz 386, VGA and 3Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib, Soundblaster soundcards; a joystick.

THE GOOD...
- Attractive Hanna-Barbera-style sprites and backdrops.
- Easy to use menu system.
- Moderately playable race sub-game.

...AND THE BAD
- Unbelievably simple puzzles means no game play.
- Extremely dated in terms of game content.
- Platform sections prove extremely frustrating at times.

OVERALL 44%

The Game of Galactic Domination and Supremacy

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DAY OF THE TENTACLE

David Upchurch gets his tentacles in a twist (sounds painful) with LucasArts' stunning graphic adventure.

That's it. I've had enough. If I have to review one more LucasArts game I'll scream. Oh, don't get me wrong - it's not that I hate 'em, it's just that my battered old thesaurus is running out of exotic alternatives to 'brilliant', 'wonderful', 'marvellous', 'excellent' and all the other tired superlatives I just have to trot out whenever those Lucas boys release another game. See how many of them you can spot as you read on. Be warned - you'll need to be wearing your special counting head because there sure is a lot of them.

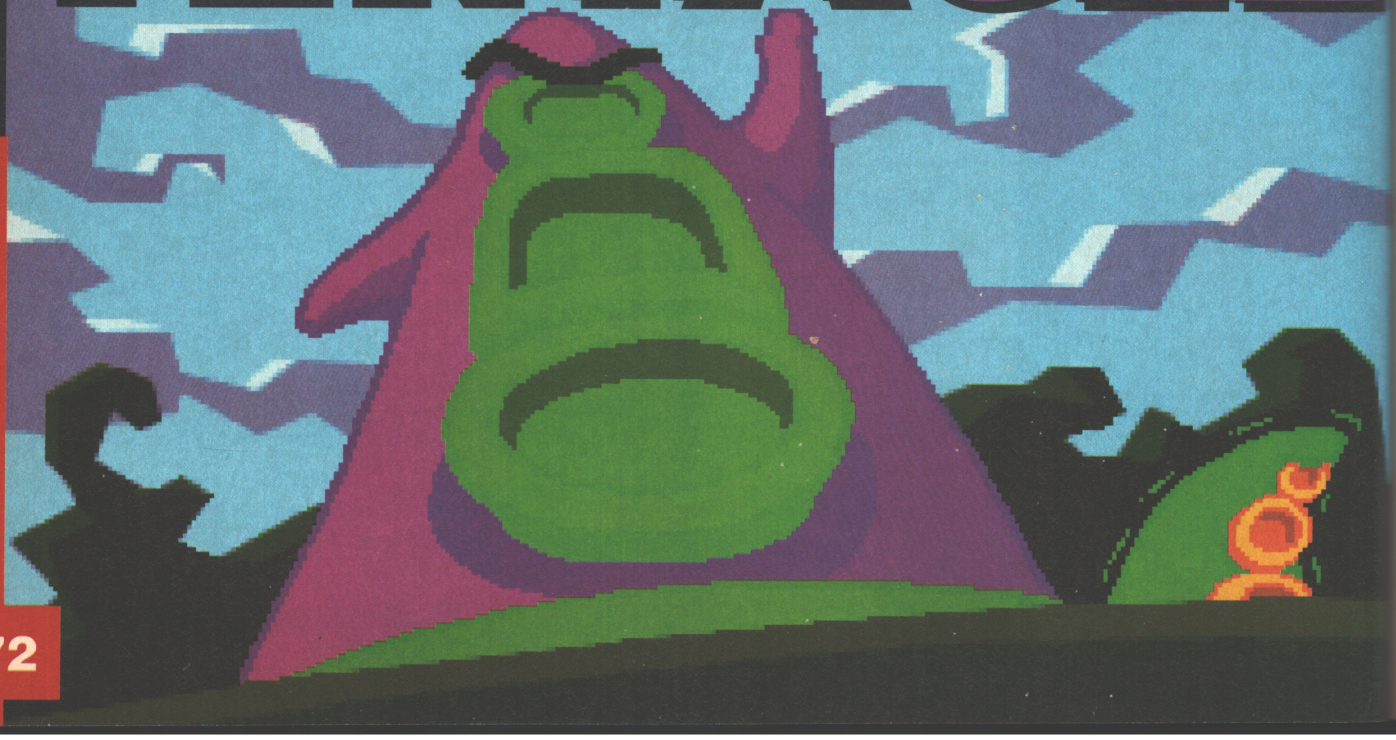
You see, to put it succinctly, Day of the Tentacle is nothing more nor less than brilliant. (There's one superlative to add to your score already.) It's the sequel to the oldy Maniac Mansion but, some characters aside, any resemblances between that dinosaur and DOTT are very, very few. In fact, if you need if you need any proof of how much LucasArts' games have progressed in the last five years you'll find the complete Maniac Mansion game, complete with sixteen colour EGA graphics, beeper sound and clunky player interface, running on a battered PC in one of the mansion's rooms. Two graphic adventures in one! How's that for value?

The game's plot is ingenious to say the least. It's also more than a little bizarre. God knows what the Lucas lads were on when they came up with it but I don't want any - I like my sanity just the way it is. There's trouble brewing at Maniac Mansion, it appears, and Dr Fred's mutant creations, the tentacles, are getting out of hand. Purple Tentacle, always a bit of a cantankerous so-and-so at the best of times, has been supping on some of the highly-mutagenic pollutant belching out of Dr Fred's lab, and developed arms and a megalomaniacal desire to take over the world. Doctor Fred, sensibly enough, decides to tie the tyrannical tentacle up in his basement, where it can (theoretically, anyway) do no harm.

● Every now and again, at key moments in the plot, you're is treated to short animated sequences allowing you to put your feet up, sup from your cuppa and congatulate yourself on how well you're doing. Above left the evil Purple Tentacle expands on his plans for complete galactic domination while above right Hoagie surfs back to the 18th Century. Like, er, crazy, man.

By means too weird and strange to go into here (though suffice to say it involves a hamster), word of this reaches the game's three heroes and former Mansion interns: Bernard, a bespectacled neurotic nerd; Laverne, who just loves to cut things up; and Hoagie, a fry-brained dude with terminal plumber's bum. Instantly grasping the wrong end of the stick they travel to the Mansion and free Purple Tentacle, who immediately slithers off and outs into effect his plans to subjugate mankind.

When Dr Fred finds out what the twit-brained trio have done, he's less than pleased. Luckily, though, there's a way out of the world-threatening predicament - the mad Doctor has just finished work on his new time-travelling machine, the Chron-O-John (so named because it's built out of old parts from an ordinary household lavvy). Doctor Fred's plan is to send Bernard and his pals back to yesterday



IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Humour is always a difficult thing to get right and up until now the only game that's been consistently funny is Monkey Island 2. But DOTT (as we 'in the biz' like to refer to it) quite simply stomps Monkey 2 into the ground, jumps up and down on it a bit, slices the flattened mush into small strips and then barbecues it. And it's not only funnier, it's prettier, cleverer, um... 'puzzlier' and all other words ending in 'er' like 'better' (but not 'otter', obviously). Yet another LucasArts classic.

Sorry Monkey Island 2...

...I love DOTT, now!

● "I don't think you should drink that..." mutters the timid Green Tentacle. "Nonsense", yells Purpley, "it makes me stronger, more intelligent, more aggressive..." and provides the plot for the game.

so that they can turn off the flow of pollutant, so that Purple Tentacle will never have the chance to drink it.

However, it all goes horribly wrong. The Chron-O-John explodes and Bernard ends up going nowhere, Laverne gets zapped two hundred years into the future when mankind are now the docile pets of the triumphant tentacles and Hoagie is whizzed two hundred years into the past, just as George Washington and his cronies are drafting the American constitution. Somehow the three have got to fix their Chron-O-Johns, reunite and save the world. Just when the world needs a hero, it ends up with this lot. Oh dear.

All this plot (which sounds a lot more complex on paper than it actually is) is summarised in a magical animated intro, accompanied by wacky iMUSE tunes, which wouldn't sound out of place in Beetlejuice, and some superb speech (soundcard permitting, of course). The gags and sheer insanity in this sequence alone are enough to get you rocking in your chair with laughter, and you'll enjoy watching it again and again - I did.

Once this is out of the way, you're into the game proper. The screen is split into two areas: the graphic window, where Bernard and pals go through their ungainly paces, and an icon window, where you'll find a panel of action icons and a illustrated inventory of the objects your currently-selected character is carrying (you can swap between Bernard, Laverne and Hoagie, you see, but I'll get to that in a moment - patience!). By selecting an action icon and then clicking on an object or person in the graphic window or inventory you can do everything you need to.

● (Left) Bernard, Laverne and Hoagie prepare to time twist, with the only slightly mad Professor Fred at the controls. It's always good to have someone you can trust in the driving seat.

● (Below) "Oooh, Matron!", as Carry On star Kenneth Williams was so fond of saying. This nurse, who has a fondness for anyone in a leotard, is just a cracked as everyone else. That's community care for you.

If you've never played a graphic adventure before then you may be a little bemused by the lack of actions available to the player. Apart from walking around, which is accomplished simply by pointing the mouse cursor where you want to go and clicking, there are just nine action icons. If you'd think this limits what you can do you'd be very wrong. You see, LucasArts long ago realised that what people like about graphic adventures is solving the puzzles, not trying out hundreds of permutations of actions with objects.

Thus LucasArts boiled down all the actions to just nine commonsense essentials - after all, if you've got a pulley and some rope and you 'use' them together then it's pretty safe to assume that you want to loop the rope over the pulley. If you try to do something nonsensical, like shove a vacuum cleaner in a mouse hole, then the system simply won't let you, and normally give you some wise-ass quip to ram the point home. However, it's wise not to be too sensible - sometimes, though not too often, you'll have to try some bizarre things to achieve your goals. It's all about being imaginative, really.

Of course, this will all be pretty familiar to LucasArts' fans - the SCUMM™ player interface, as it's called, is near identical to the ones in LucasArts' earlier Monkey 2 and Indy IV. In fact the only innovation I spotted is that if you pick up an object from the graphic screen or the inventory without first selecting an action then the interface immediately assumes, sensibly enough, that somehow you'll want to 'use' it on something else. It's a little thing, but it all goes to make the game just that little bit friendlier to play, especially as the 'Use' icon is

MEET THE GANG!

BERNARD

Pronounced 'Burrrr-narrrrd', Bernard is the gang's nominal leader and compared to the psychotic Laverne and the so-laid-back-he's-horizontal Hoagie, he's pretty normal. Bernard is destined to become the train-spotters' hero, with his Elastoplast-fixed NHS glasses and gangly, awkward gait.

LAVERNE

Don't mess with Laverne. For some reason she loves dissecting anything small, furry and helpless, so keep her away from the hamsters. Fortunately she's taught a few lessons in life when she gets zapped into the future where the tentacles have enslaved humans as their pets. Thankfully they don't cut them up, though.

HOAGIE

Heavy-metal freak and all-round dude, Hoagie is the person whisked back to the time of the drafting of the American constitution. In fact, it's was him who put on the amendment giving Americans the right to bear surfboards. If it wasn't for the disgusting acres of bum that flop out of the back of his jeans he'd be a top bloke.

probably the one most commonly selected.

The core of the game is, of course, puzzle solving. By clicking on the small cameos in the bottom right of the screen you can switch between Bernard, Laverne and Hoagie at will, tackling the problems they face in each era in any order you see fit. However, it won't be long before you hit a dead end and encounter a problem that can't be solved with the items to be found in the trio's respective time zones.

And this is DOTT's big twist. Although the Chron-O-Johns can no transport organic objects through time, like Bernard and co., it can still pass inorganic objects. By clicking on an object and dragging it over one of the cameos you can send stuff through time as much as you want. This is clever - you really have to use your noodle to work out how objects

● Ah, the rolling green fields surrounding the mansion - just the sort of calming view the mansion's inmates need. Here you'll find Benjamin Franklin out flying his kite. What a shock.

● (Left) What used to be Prof Fred's office has been converted into a handy holding pen for those pesky humans by the 22nd Century. How will Laverne be able to go out adventuring trapped behind that laser-beam fence?

● (Below) The mansion's conference room - just the sort of place you'd expectto find an inflatable clown.

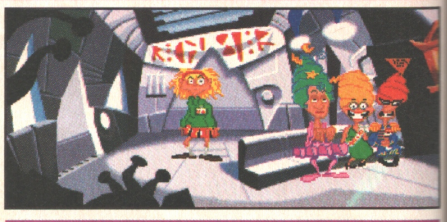
ALL WE CAN DO IS STEP BACK IN TIME...

THE 18th CENTURY

The mansion foyer doesn't half change over the centuries, I can tell you. Here it's a rather quaint wood-'n'-woad affair. Don't bother the receptionist, though - he's a little tied up at the moment.

THE 20th CENTURY

Now let's move on a couple of centuries. Isn't it amazing what a few dabs of cheap emulsion and crappy venetian blinds can do for a place? It feels so much more airy, doesn't it? But I don't like those lampshades, I have to say.



THE 22nd CENTURY

Ah, the future. We're all interested in the future, because that's where you and I will spend the rest of our lives. Shame it's so gun-metal grey. By the way don't ask me what those three 'women' are doing, because you just won't believe me.

● (Above) Wow, it's, like, the writing of the American constitution! And all the big nobs are here. But how can Hoagie persuade George Washington to chop down a qumquat tree in the garden (right)? Well, he'll have to paint the town red, first...

can be used not just in a character's own time period but also in those of the others - but not half as clever as the other ways in which LucasArts have used the decade-spanning scenario.

You see, although Bernard, Laverne and Hoagie are seperated in time, they not seperated in space. Each character is exploring three very different mansions, one in the past, one in the present and one in the future. As you swap between characters you'll recognise that all the locations look roughly the same, but radically changed by the years. That's a nice touch, but the clever bit comes when you realise you can pass objects through time without the Chron-O-John, i.e. the hard way, by leaving it in a location and letting someone collect it years down the line.

For example, in the future Laverne has a cold hamster that she need to warm up before it'll power the hamster-driven generator. Bernard, however, has a just-perfect woolly jumper, but it's too big to fit the tiny mammal. However, if Bernard sticks the jumper in the washing machine and lets it cycle for two hundred years then - hey presto! - Laverne will find that the jumper has shrunk to just the right size!

It's ideas like this that make DOTT a truly magical experience. Add to that the gorgeous cartoon animation, incredible sound, cunning but not infuriating puzzles and some excellently scripted humour, and you have what is undoutedly the most enjoyable graphic adventure ever.

If I have a moan it's that it's all over too quickly, not because of any short-changing on LucasArts but simply because, like a great book, you want it to go on for ever. It's quite simply a classic.

DAY OF THE TENTACLE

US Gold/LucasArts
(021 625 3388)
£42.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 25MHz 386 PC with 2Mb of memory, VGA and 16Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards; a mouse.

THE GOOD...

- The plot is inspired, and provides some excellent time-spanning puzzles.
- It makes love to your eyes, your eyes, your brain and your chuckle muscles.
- The SCUMM player interface is friendlier than ever.

...AND THE BAD

- Couldn't it have been a bit longer, LucasArts?
- The solutions to the time-spanning puzzles can be frustratingly obscure at times.

OVERALL 94%

● In the mansion's car park there's a very strange man trying to get into 'his' car. Isn't it a little warm for a balaclava? Bernard really needs that crowbar, but the stranger won't give it up without a fight - or a round of mutually-beneficial swapsies. Many of the game's problems revolve around situations like this, with Bernard and co. having to trade items with other characters to get the things they need.

● (Below) Time travelling ain't like dustin' crops, boy. Make the wrong calculation and you could end up flying straight into a star or a... er... flying eyeball. One thing's for sure - Michael J. Fox never had these problems in the Back to The Future films. Little do Bernard and the gang know it, but this jaunt through the dimensions is just the start of their problems - and the beginning of your enjoyment in Day of the Tentacle.

FRONTIER Elite 2

David Upchurch takes a look at the game that many people are already calling "the sequel to the classic Elite".

Arriving nearly a decade after the original Elite and following five years in development you'd expect Frontier to be good. The big shock is just how good it is. A few reservations aside (which I'll come to later) Frontier is the most impressive game I've seen in a long time and, more importantly, the most enjoyable. The love letter starts here...

Anyone familiar with the old Elite will feel instantly at home with Frontier, as the basic gameplay is practically identical. In fact, despite the gorgeous graphics, it even feels like a game from the 80s. From your humble starting point with just a spaceship and a meagre handful of Credits you're free to explore the galaxy, ferrying valuable goods between star systems, delivering parcels and escorting passengers between worlds, battling space pirates and seeking out strange new worlds and civilisations. (Or was that another game?)

There are no guidelines as to how you conduct yourself. You can either be a goody-goody or a ne'er-do-well, although bear in mind that what goes around comes around so if you do stray onto the wrong side of the law be sure you're capable of dealing with the subsequent police attention. You can also do work for the military which, although potentially lucrative, carries with it much higher risks.

With the cash raised by your errands, whether legal or illegal, you can slowly but surely upgrade your ship with all manner of goodies, such as beam weapons, missiles, shields, higher-powered hyperdrives and so on. If you're running out of room you can even trade in your ship for a new model with bigger luggage space and a roof rack (probably).

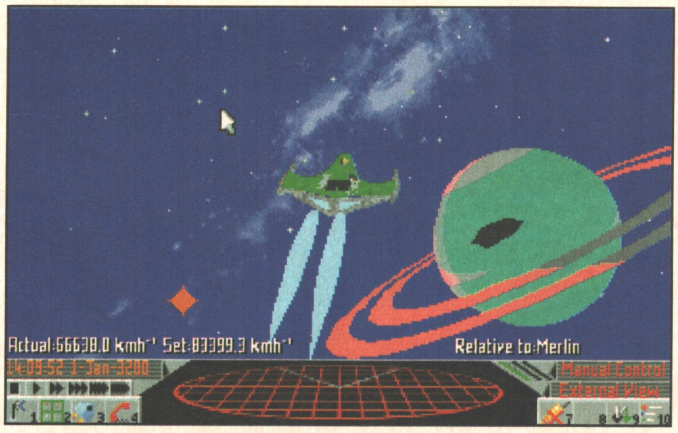
Your ultimate aim is to... er, well to be honest there isn't one. There's no 'end sequence' to look forward simply because, strictly speaking, there's no end to the game - except by death. Basically you can keep playing on and on until you've had enough and any satisfaction comes from achieving goals you set yourself.

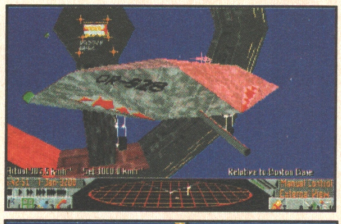
This lack of rigid game structure may be a little off-putting to some players reared on games with a set sequence of play and pre-ordained aims. This freedom you have makes Frontier slightly tougher to get into than most games. The first time you call up the galactic map you're likely to be a little daunted - after all, there are an estimated 300,000 inhabited worlds and spacestations to visit! Once over the initial learning curve, though, you'll discover that the game is incredibly engrossing and it's frighteningly easy to lose hours of your life inside Frontier's atmospheric galaxy.

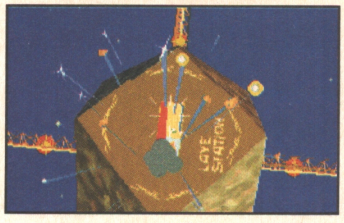
Still, Frontier's not completely perfect it must be said. All trading and mission selection is carried out via the computer network at each starport or spacestation. Trouble is, no matter where you go these computer screens always look the same. It would've been nice to have some more local character injected into the different locations - as it stands it's a bit disappointing to travel from one end of the galaxy to the other only to find yourself staring at the same bland screen you saw back where you started.

And while the 3D work is lovely and very fast - some of the views you can produce with the external cameras are stunning- personally I could have done without the texture mapping, especially on the buildings. The textures used are very coarse, making even the mightiest tower look like it's been built out of Lego bricks. It all looks like it was added as a bit of an afterthought which, since the game otherwise looks nigh identical to the Amiga version, I suspect it was.

But let's not dwell on these minor gripes because in every other respect Frontier excels. It certainly shows up all the other would-be Elite beaters - Privateer springs instantly to mind - to be the gaudy, shallow pretenders they really are. When all's said and done I had a brilliant time playing Frontier, and I suspect you will too.







● At each starport you can log onto the local computer network to buy goods and upgrades and find jobs.

● (Left) Although I've whinged in the review about Frontier's texture mapping it actually works very well here where it's been used to create an authentic-looking Milky Way background.

● (Below left) Nice, eh? Here's your ship leaving the safety of a 2001-style orbiting spacestation. From here the galaxy's the limit!

● (Bottom left) You can try and dock with the spacestations manually but unless you're a bit nifty you could end up splattered over the station's hull - like here.

FRONTIER: ELITE 2

GameTek/David Braben
(0753) 553445
£39.99 Out Now

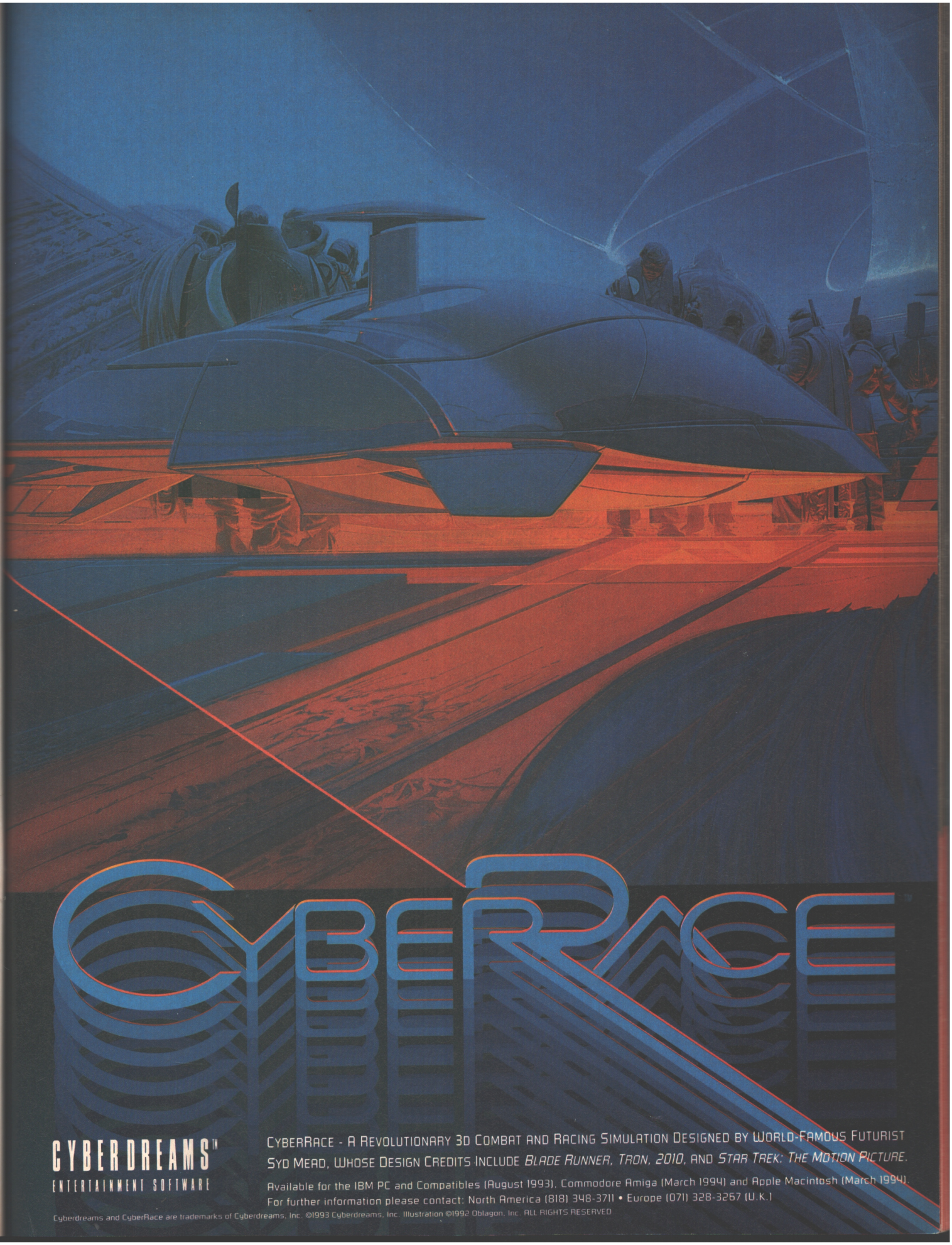
MINIMUM SPECS: 386 PC with 2Mb of memory, VGA and 1.5 Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards; a mouse; a joystick.

THE GOOD...
- Total freedom to do whatever you want to do.
- Vast area to play around in - the whole galaxy, no less!
- Exciting dogfights that are full of surprises.

...AND THE BAD
- May not appeal to the 'modern' games-player's tastes.
- Takes time to get into.

OVERALL 95%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CYBERDREAMS™
ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE
CyberRace - A Revolutionary 3D Combat and Racing Simulation Designed by World-Famous Futurist Syd Mead, Whose Design Credits Include Blade Runner, Tron, 2010, and Star Trek: The Motion Picture.
Available for the IBM PC and Compatibles (August 1993), Commodore Amiga (March 1994) and Apple Macintosh (March 1994).
For further information please contact: North America (818) 348-3711 • Europe (071) 328-3267 (U.K.)
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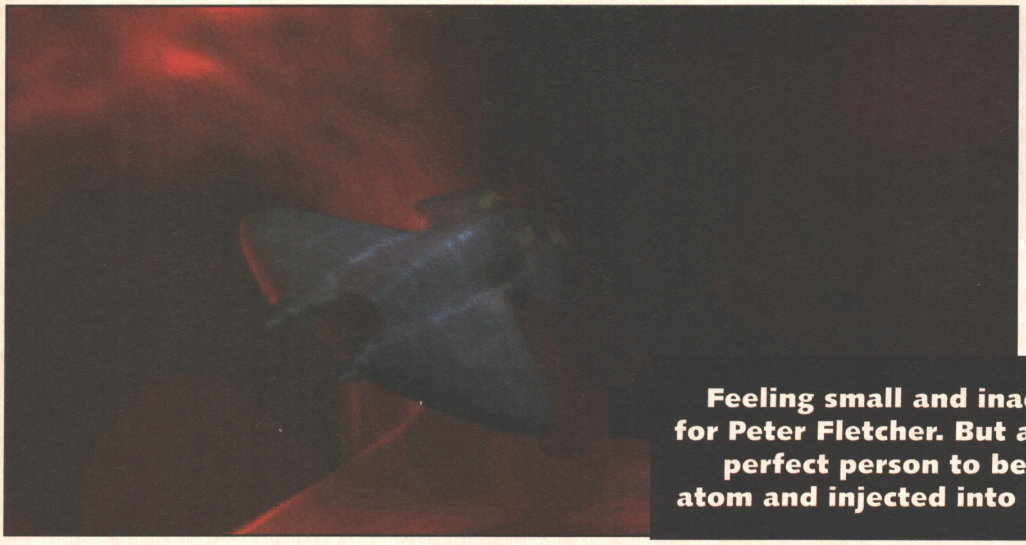
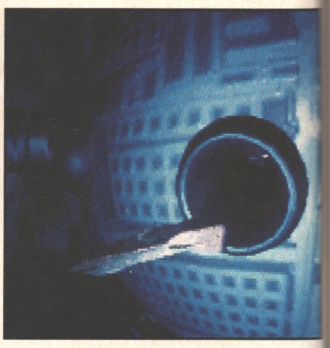


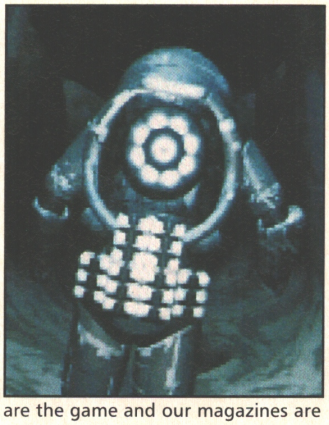


Feeling small and inadequate is commonpla for Peter Fletcher. But at least it means he's t perfect person to be shrunk to the size of a atom and injected into a dying man. Lucky hi

MICROCOSM

America? Pah! I spit on thee with your greasy burgers and 'fries', your baseball caps, your gang-land warfare and your fully-rendered 3D digitisation graphic techniques. Begone from our shores and leave us to enjoy our simple polygon activities, our 286 machines and our inadequate attempts to unravel memory set-up routines in order to run games such as Strike Commander, Links 386 Pro and, indeed, Microcosm.

But what, really, is the use? You can no doubt see through my pathetic attempt at scorn, seeing it for what it really is - envy. How I would love to see the technology and presentational skills of Mr William Clinton's subjects applied to the inventiveness of our own programming talents. David Braben may be able to cram an entire galaxy onto one floppy disk but can he make it graphically appealing? No he can not. You may cry the oft-touted phrase 'Graphics do not make the game' but all too often these days the graphics



are the game and our magazines are becoming filled with terminology such as 'Gouraud', 'rendering' and 'bitmap-scaling'. And it seems the buying public is all too ready to be swayed by flashy visuals and animated delights. Why else would such games as Privateer and The 7th Guest feature so predominantly in the charts?

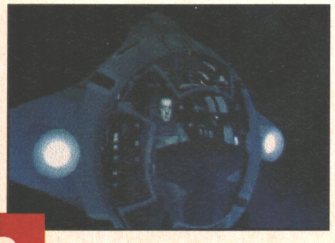
Microcosm too, I fear, will soon be amongst them, for no better reason than it has a visual banquet of an introductory sequence and a continued supply of Ferrero Rocher after-dinner chocs as in-game graphics. It certainly doesn't have a game to speak of, beyond the type that was popular half a decade ago when the term graphical excellence meant a title that could run in EGA and innovative gameplay meant you could use a joystick.

The plot, for what it's worth as I really can't believe it was developed before the basic game was devised (a more likely scenario being that the main designer was watching a medical programme on one of the 'networks', as they insist on calling them, saw some shots of a miniaturised camera racing along a blood vessel and thought 'I wonder if I could do that on a computer?'), centres around the president of a futuristic corporation whose body has been invaded by the miniature soldiers of a rival company.

You are deemed to be the best man to cure this threat and so are miniaturised yourself and injected into the prez's bloodstream, piloting a state-of-the-art submersible vessel. Yes, well, the comparisons with at least two major motion pictures are stupefyingly apparent so I see no reason to mention them here, suffice to say that the actual gameplay bears little resemblance to what this introductory story seemed to be offering and both the films induced a greater feeling of 'involvement'.

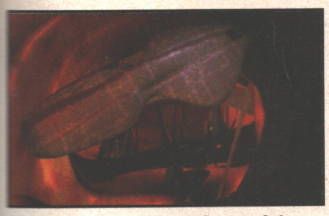
The game consists of short periods of first-person 3D shoot-'em-up aracde action, interspersed by lavish animation cutaways to 'tell the story' - imagine a cross between Operation Wolf and Gray's Medical Dictionary, without either the sheer amount of mayhem from the former or the ruder and more squelchier areas of body matter from the latter.

Occasionally you'll be required to push left or right on the stick/mouse/keys in order to navigate your way to the end-of-ligament guardian (one of the enemy soldiers piloting various different forms of shrunken machinery), but the majority of your time is spent shooting away at both the body's natural defence mechanisms and the occasional unnatural defence mechanism as deployed by the enemy.

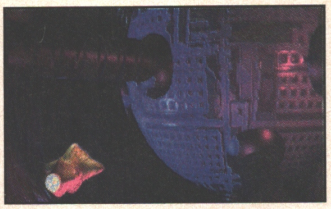


● **Hey! Looky there - it's you, in your miniaturised sub-like thing. Hard or what?**

● **In the later stages of the game you're actually required to leave your sub and indulge in some good old-fashioned *mano à mano* combat. And that wimp Roy Scheider never even gets his feet wet.**



● Your sub is a thing of graceful beauty - just as well 'cos you get to see it enough times in the anims.



● Every so often you'll encounter waystations that you can dock at for refueling and rearming, etc.

Also waiting for you are various power-ups (shields, fire-rate increasers and different weapons), although why these things are never included on your ship before you start is a mystery that has troubled me in many a game before.

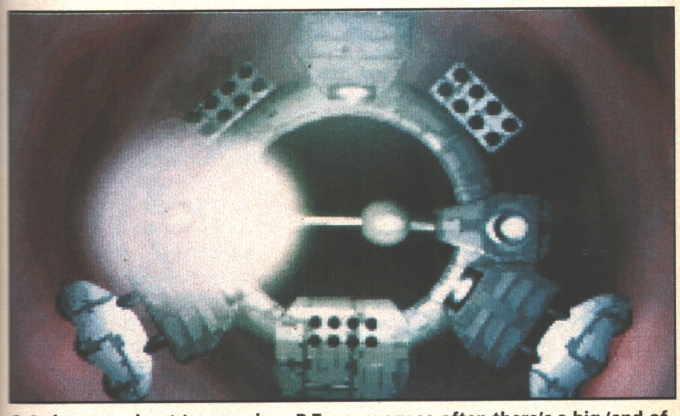
The one section that does offer a large sense of interactivity is also the last one in the game, a tricky maze section based in the president's brain. Not only are you shooting at various antibodies and bacteria (as well as an enemy-launched homing missile in what was presumably meant to be a thrilling chase sequence before the end), but you are picking your route at regular junctions. Still not the most involving of gameplay but more than has so far been offered.

Of course the graphics are excellent but in that 'initial thrill' sort of way, the type that lasts for only as long as you're watching them before vanishing and quickly failing to leave any kind of lasting impression. Also excellent is the sound, with the Rick Wakeman-created musical scores being the game's most impressive aspect and lending Microcosm the enjoyment and atmosphere it has so badly been lacking till now. Thank goodness CD-ROMs can be played through a normal audio CD player as the music is certainly something I wouldn't mind playing in the background of one of my all-too-infrequent leisure periods.

I get the feeling that comments about sound and music in reviews of CD games are soon to become as extinct as the words 'Jurassic Park' are not when describing anything from a free promotional item to the state of the British economy in the tabloid press. As soon as the small problems of accessing times, synchronisation and scratchy digitisation playbacks are conquered, we game reviewers are going to have to add the skill of music critic to our resumes. Heavens, I'm already commenting on music by Rick Wakeman. Who next? Joe Cocker? The Beatles? Take That? Let's hope not for all our sakes. We're pretentious enough as it is.

I suppose my initial 'America envy' is short lived. I still wish our own designers could come up with aesthetics like Microcosm's to complement their innovative game design skills, but I know that's not going to happen until British software houses actually start paying attention to our developers needs. Until then I fear a steady diet of junk food games - good looking, well packaged but with virtually no healthy meat content whatsoever. But there are exceptions on both sides. Origin's RPG side and LucasArts continue to shine across the pond, as do Bullfrog and a host of one-man programming teams over here. Microcosm isn't on this list though and with good reason.

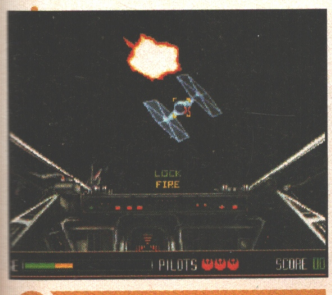
● Hey! That's enough about the inter-game graphics, let's take a look at the actual *game*. And here it is. The whole thing revolves around travelling down narrow vessels and arteries, zapping the little blobs that fly towards you in classic Space Harrier fashion. You know, it's just like gameplay was never invented.



● As in every shoot-'em-up since R-Type, every so often there's a big 'end-of-level' bad guy to defeat. And, in classic fashion, they each have a weak point that must be located and exploited before they'll bite the big one. You know the sort of thing...

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Microcosm is very similar to LucasArts' Rebel Assault, which was reviewed earlier this very issue. Both are basically simple shoot-'em-ups laced with gorgeous animations and superb CD-quality soundtracks. However, where Rebel Assault scores over Microcosm is that it has much more variety in the gameplay and the graphics and, to top it all off, it's Star Wars.



Rebel Assault's like...

...Microcosm, but good.

MICROCOSM

Psygnosis/In-house
(051) 709 5755
£TBA Out January

MINIMUM SPECS: 33 Mhz 386 PC with 2.5Mb of memory, VGA, 7Mb of hard disk space and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS: Roland, Sound Blaster and Adlib soundcards; a mouse; a joystick; a keyboard.

THE GOOD...

- A graphical feast with a stunning introductory sequence.
- Superb music by Rick Wakeman (and I'm not just saying that).

...AND THE BAD

- Limited gameplay with little thought given to scope.
- Repetitive action that doesn't inspire long-term playing.

OVERALL 61%

STARLORD

Ah... intergalactic domination. One man's will reaching out beyond the stars, crushing those who get in the way, having tea and Bourbon biscuits with those who don't. Dean Evans packs his digestives, dons his cloak and goes boldly where almost everyone has gone before.

"It is the far future. The galaxy rests in a blissful state of happiness as it has done for the last millennium. There is no war, there is no disease and people laugh, play and sing joyful songs..."

No. Wait a minute. Things like this never happen. A content galaxy? A galaxy with no war? I don't believe it. Very rarely do you find a happy galaxy, a place where the people agree to lay down their weapons, wear flowers in their hair and sit lazily by babbling brooks on summer days reading ancient poetry. The future is always darker, more brooding and always overshadowed with menace. Let's start again.

"It is the far future. The galaxy is torn by strife and bloodshed as opposing families struggle for supremacy. The Imperial rule has been undermined by betrayal and assassination and the social structure has regressed into feudalism."

This is the Starlord galaxy, a vast and violent place, devoid of morality and good-will. Starlord itself is a game that encourages you to throw your morals out the window and to walk the path of selfishness and bloody galactic advancement. You are one of a thousand Starlords and the time is ripe to rise up the aristocratic ladder. Destroy your opponents (or marry them), steal, pillage and trade your way upwards. Cunning plans must be hatched, huge battles must be fought and tangled webs must be weaved.

Or something like that anyway. In a saner, less passionate world, Starlord is a space epic that presents a huge strategic challenge. Starting on your home planet with one ship and a meagre amount of cash, you must reach out across the stars and exert your influence, feeble as it may be.

You can either play as a single starlord (the easier option) or in Dynasty mode which means you have to fight huge battles, cruise around the galaxy and still find time to get married and father twenty or so children. Families come to wield huge influence in Starlord, so if you want to crush some of your smaller opponents, you can steamroller them with the awesome combined might of your family arsenal. It's a frightening sight, I can tell you.

Of course, galactic domination isn't as easy I might have made it sound because there are a thousand other hopefuls out there, all wanting a slice of the action, a piece of the pie and a knob of the butter(?). You can either work together with these other Lords, ignore each other completely or crush them, cut them into little bits, jump on them and then burn them (it always pays to be thorough).

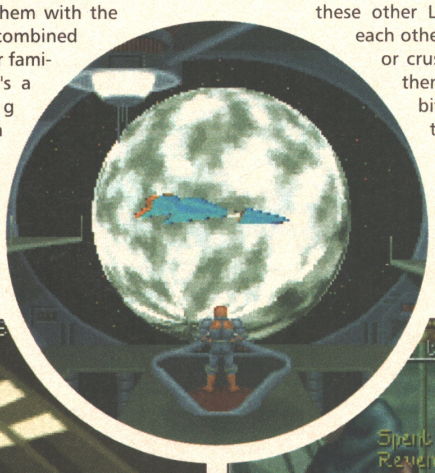
But Starlord isn't about huge 3D space battles, far from it. It is, as I've mentioned, a space strategy game, and a huge one at that. As for the 3D bits... well, stunning though they may be the polygon spacecraft are cosmetic at best. You can even switch them off if you're a strategy purist.

Of course you don't have to fight. You can go in all guns blazing if you want or you can stroll in casually and invite your enemy for a quick drink in the old Gas Cloud and Firkin down the High Road. Sometimes peace is a better weapon than all-out force. Battles can be lost, a peace usually can't.

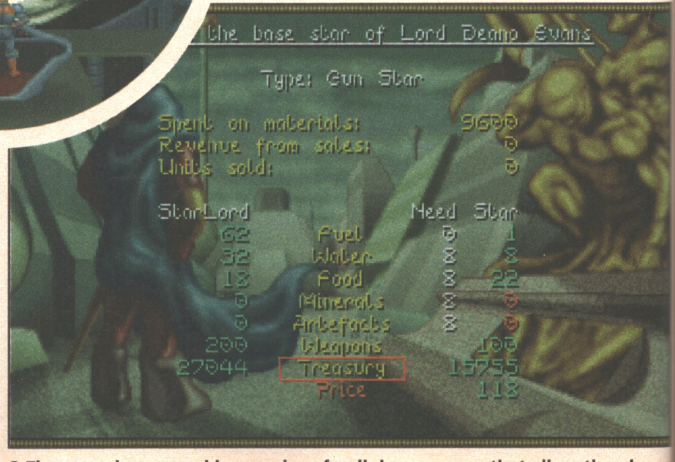
The battles themselves can be fought any one of three ways. The results can be simulated, i.e the com-

REAL TIME SHOOTIN'

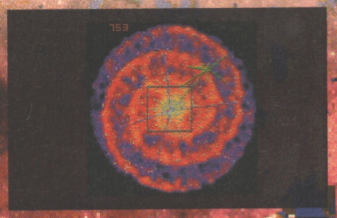
Real Time battles in Starlord take two distinctly different forms. If you're playing the game as a pure, unadulterated strategy affair then you'll probably go for the old 2D battle grid. Playing them this way, the battles are resolved in the manner of an old hex-based boardgame. Move your fleet into defensive and offensive positions, advance, intercept or throw caution to the solar winds and attack. A lot of thought is required so you may decide to opt for the more attractive 3D battles...



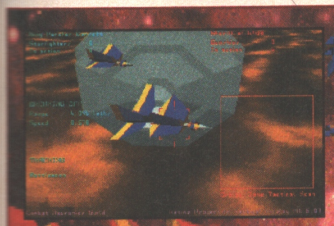
● Starlord has a medieval feel and includes Lords, Earls, Kings, Queens and the Emperor (or Empress).



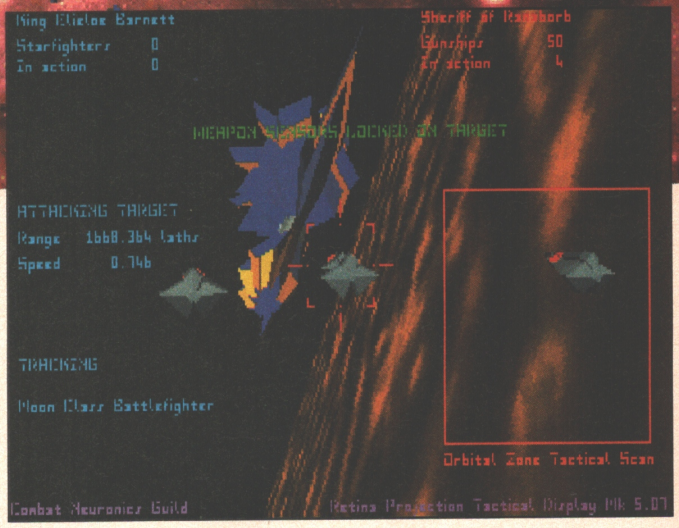
● The game is accessed by a series of pull down menus that allow the player to move, fight, trade and communicate with other Starlords.



● The galaxy map can be zoomed in to show individual stars and identify which Lords, Earls, Kings, etc, own them. Here is the throne star, centre of the Imperium.



...Now this is the bit that's been getting all the attention and it's easy to see why. But what you have to remember is that these 3D battle sections aren't a necessary or indeed an integral part of the game. The control system takes some getting used to but you don't really have to jump in and control anything at all. In fact it's like being the player manager of a football team. You can watch your team play and if they're not playing well you can nip onto the pitch and help them out. That's the plan anyway.



● As I grappled with the controls I said, as Han Solo put it so poignantly in Star Wars, "I've got a bad feeling about this." Starlord's controls aren't the best I've seen.

puter weighs up the relative strengths of the opposing fleets, performs incredibly tortuous statistical calculations and comes up with a winner or, if you fancy getting more involved, you can play the game in 'real time', fighting either in glorious 3D or on the tactical 2D battle grid.

But as I've mentioned, Starlord is strategy orientated, and if Starlord was to stick its eggs in one basket, it'd put them here. Okay, so Privateer lets you swan around the Gemini sector but what about food and water consumption? If you kill a trader, why doesn't his angry brother fly out after you seeking vengeance? Because it's all combat orientated that's why. It's not a working universe and the other denizens don't act independently.

Starlord, on the other hand, is a game where the emphasis has been placed on having good artificial intelligence. For example, if you were to destroy Lord Pete Barnett, his father and brothers would soon gang up and pit their combined forces against you. Every move you make must be thoroughly thought out. Incur the wrath of a huge family and you'll be a cloud of atoms before you know it.

So with all this in mind I will shout a big BEWARE to all you potential buyers! Remember that Starlord isn't another Elite or a Privateer. It's very much it's own game, putting strategy before 3D action. Starlord is an enormous challenge. You could spend weeks building up a powerful navy only to see the Emperor overthrown by one of your powerful rivals. You may be attacked at home, send out a desperate call to arms but be abandoned by your allies. Members of your family could be assassinated, kidnapped or seduced and blackmailed. In Starlord people won't think twice about using your back for knife practice.

● Starlord has a number of random encounters. As you travel between the stars you might be attacked by pirates or diverted to rescue a stricken freighter.

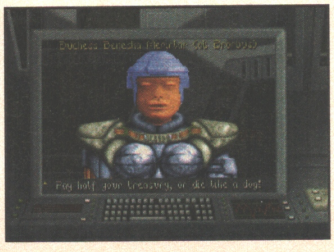
As with most high-end games these days, it's important to run Starlord on a fast machine. If you're not going to bother with the 3D bits then this isn't as important. But watching the battles really brightens up the game, with the garishly coloured livery of the space fleets and the gorgeously rendered planetary surfaces. On anything less than a 486 the polygon ships chug along slower than Thomas the Tank Engine with his boiler on low heat.

There's so much going on in Starlord that I haven't the time or the space to go into it all here (unless we drop the size of the text) so you'll have to discover it all for yourselves. Starlord is a huge game and whether you turn the 3D bits on or off, it's a strategic challenge without par.

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Starlord is obviously going to draw comparisons with both Elite and Privateer but it couldn't be more different. In fact, if you see Starlord as principally a strategy game then the gameplay lies more along the lines of Masters of Orion, another MicroProse release. Both deal with galactic domination, although for sheer attention to detail and depth Starlord wins hands down. Starlord is not an Elite beater. But then again it was never supposed to be.

Masters Of Orion, meet...



...Starlord.

STARLORD

Microprose/Maelstrom
(0454) 326532
£44.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 33 MHz 386 PC with 640K memory, VGA and 14Mb of hard disk space

ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards; a mouse, a joystick.

THE GOOD...

- A strategic challenge that'll keep you playing for weeks
- Your enemies are far from stupid.
- It's absolutely vast.

...AND THE BAD

- The combat system is difficult to get the hang of.
- Could prove to be a statistical nightmare for the strategy novice.

OVERALL 85%

FIRE & ICE

"Hnnggh, Ib dunb lib thug gumm" said Peter Fletcher after a dabble with Renegade's addition to the platform genre. His lips were numb with frost you see. Read on for a translation.

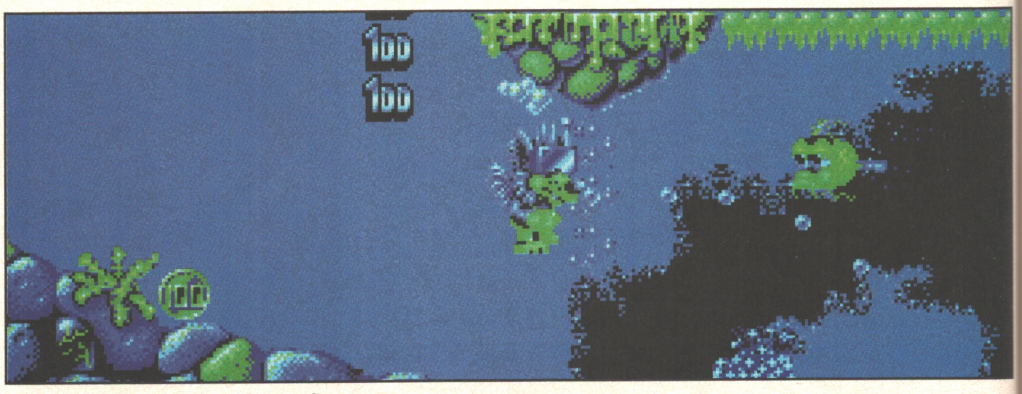
I despair of similes, I really do. Trying to start each review with a witty comparison is like driving an 1840s train with a single lump of coal - eventually you just run out of steam and have to resort to a couple of puns. So here goes, apologies for any embarrassment:

I was expecting to give Fire & Ice a warm greeting (one) when it arrived, little did I realise what a hot potato (two) it was going to turn out to be. My initial blazing reception (three) soon cooled (four) when it burned its image (five) on my screen.

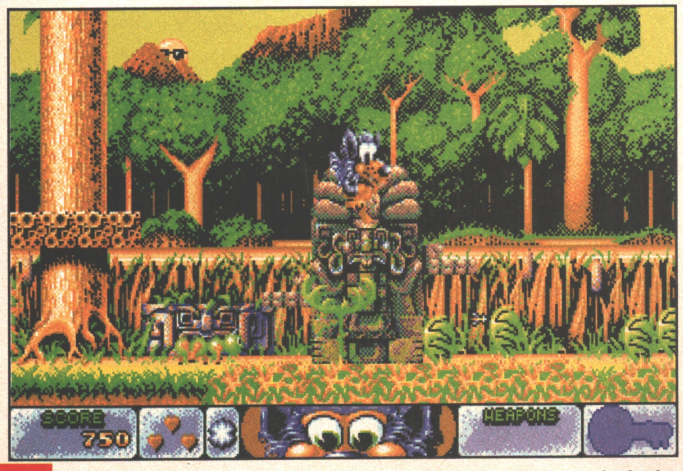
There, it's all over now. You can open your eyes, I've finished. Returning to elegant prose mode. Any verbal wordplays that crop up from now on are purely unintentional so I can only offer my sincerest of apologies in advance.

All is not well in Fluffyland. Monsters have appeared around every corner and the world has... been... oh hell. I'm not going to bother with the plot. You know it has no importance. I know it has no importance. Renegade knows it has no importance. The only person for whom a plot in a platform game has any significance is the lucky blighter that's on a horrendously large word rate for writing the manual. For me to reprint the details here would mean depriving you of the hours of unputdownable pleasure that reading his wordstuffs would bring should you buy the game.

It's like reading the film reviews of the never-popular Alexander Walker in the London Evening Standard and having to endure his constantly irritating habit of revealing the ending of each film he peruses. We, as games players, have to play a game as close to its terminus as possible and let you know of its entirety. You cannot help but watch a film to the end (except Demolition Man of course, a celluloid travesty that any man, woman or



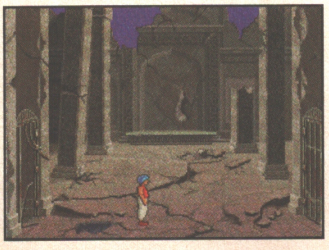
● The underwater levels add a touch of variety, albeit a small one. Gravity works differently and there are plenty of clams to jump on to give an extra lift.



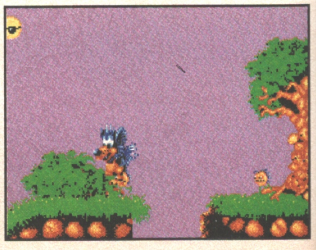
● The forest levels are much the same as the icy ones except the bad guys and the interactive scenery differs accordingly. Here you get a moving idol to ride on over the flytraps. All levels work like this - overall theme = atypical features.

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Well, it's a bit like any other platform game that has ever made the precarious journey from console land to the PC kingdom. It's closest comparisons would be Zool, Magic Pockets and Trolls, games which do nothing for the PC's long fight against triviality but do offer a modicum of entertainment for the masses. The best platform game to 'jump up and be noticed', if I might use an obvious analogy, is Prince Of Persia 2 - a fine example of what you can do when you put some thought into it.



POP 2 leaps over...



...Fire & Ice.

child with half a mind would walk out from during the opening credits), so you have no need to prove anything Mr Walker. Please, stop it. It's not big or clever. (Now back to the review.)

Plotlings aside, what of the game's reason d'etre? Its objectives? To paraphrase the bard "Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or take arms against a sea of furry bad guys and by jumping around on platforms end them". And you collect keys too. And bonuses. Pretty much your standard platform japery fare.

Fire & Ice's Things That Set It Apart are: You freeze the villains before you shatter them, some bad guys hold key pieces needed to open the level's exit door and you have a couple of little companions, mini-yous that act as shields and weapons and need to be taken to the exit door to complete the level in the true sense of the word.

Innovation and originality appear to be two words that jumped through the window during the game's design meeting, landing on the passing Prince Of Persia 2 and running off with it before anyone noticed they'd gone. Quite simply it's more platforms, more cute characters and it pushes forward the boundaries of the genre as much as a Catholic priest pushes forward the teachings of Buddha during his weekly sermon.

Good points? You insist on good points? Reviewer's Manual Rule 334b: Every review must be impartial, listing both the good and the bad aspects in as informative a manner as possible. Well okay, Fire And Ice has a jolly little tune on its title page, played in an amusing animated manner by the game's star on a piano. That's it. That's yer lot, John. There's no more to be said, the case is closed, the defence rests and has a jolly confident look on its face. The game should not be released, but since I have not the power to prevent it I shall have to contend with diverting your attention to other areas of the gaming world. It deserves your money as much as the general public deserves another novel from Jeffrey Archer.

Now this may sound slightly snobby (but then when doesn't it?) but I really don't think the PC games player needs to spend time with Amiga port-overs. The PC, at its best, is incalculably more powerful than a humble A500 and can attempt things that Mr Commodore and his pals wouldn't even be able to think of.

Now many of you out there no doubt fall into the bracket known as teenager and about now your thoughts are turning to new things. You are noticing girls, you are discovering popular independently signed beat-combos from Manchester (and surrounding suburbs) and are sampling the platform-related wares of Messers Nintendo and Sega. And you're no doubt enjoying them, as is your right. Far be it for me to pull the plug from the socket and say "Time for bed young man/woman/child".

But while the likes of Mario and Sonic all have elements that justify their popularity, those of the Fire & Ice ilk (including Trolls, Sleepwalker - for all its good intentions - and Zool) are stuck in the backwardness of the Amiga world, a world where software houses churn out one formula game after the other.

In the Amiga market the developers have their audience and they keep them there by supplying the tried and tested. I'm not saying things aren't like that over here, but here at least we have a large number of companies, along with an ever-increasing technical ability, to try new and exciting things all the time. Fire & Ice, along with its cohorts, simply takes the most standard elements of a popular Amiga genre and attempts to deliver them to a market that demands far more than the simple tidbits being displayed.

OOH, THAT'S PRETTY

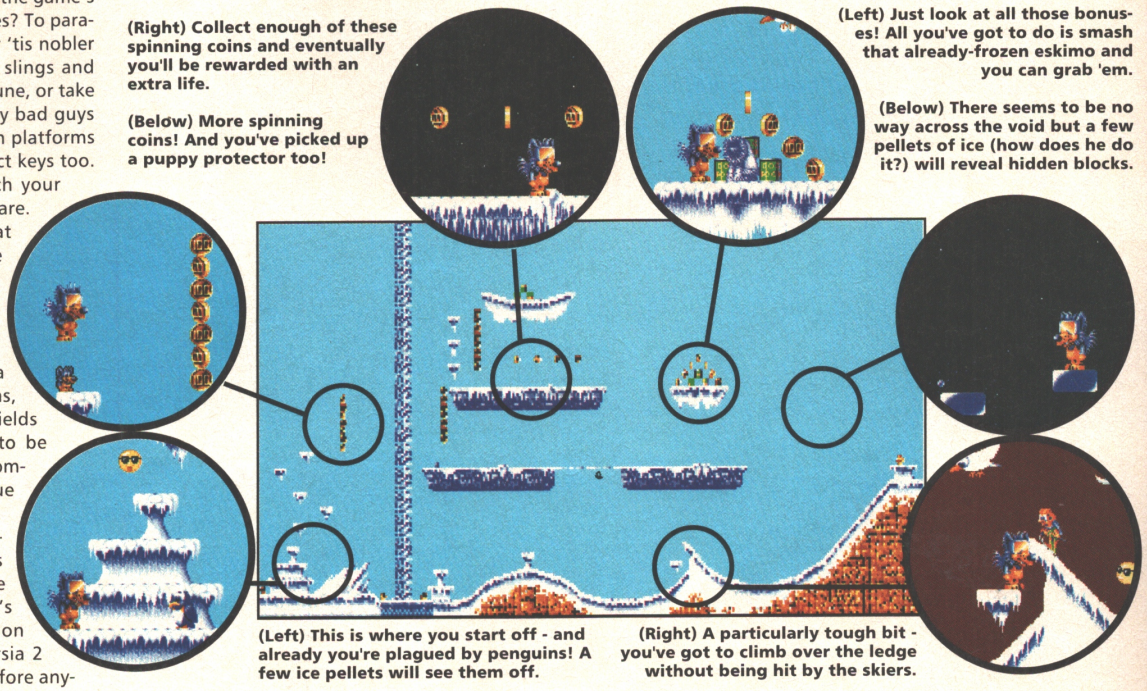
Let me take you on a journey, a journey that will take you through all the perils you'll meet in your very first few seconds of play. It's a hard and dangerous path, but you will learn much along the way, my student...

(Right) Collect enough of these spinning coins and eventually you'll be rewarded with an extra life.

(Below) More spinning coins! And you've picked up a puppy protector too!

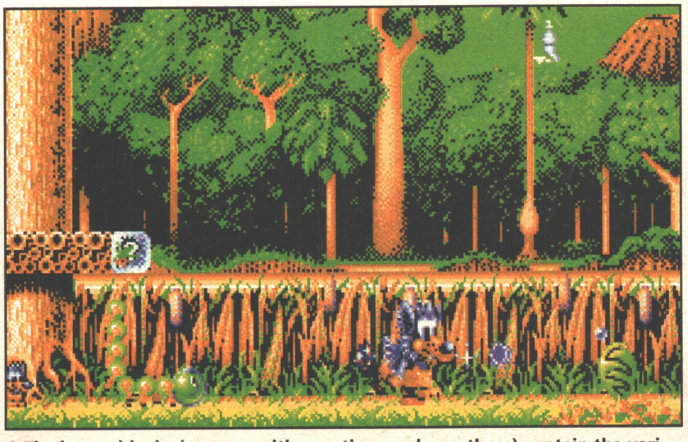
(Left) Just look at all those bonuses! All you've got to do is smash that already-frozen eskimo and you can grab 'em.

(Below) There seems to be no way across the void but a few pellets of ice (how does he do it?) will reveal hidden blocks.



(Left) This is where you start off - and already you're plagued by penguins! A few ice pellets will see them off.

(Right) A particularly tough bit - you've got to climb over the ledge without being hit by the skiers.



● The bonus blocks (squares with question marks on them) contain the various different weapons you can play with. Smart bombs, ice balls, air bombs, multi-directional firers. All the clichés and more.

FIRE & ICE

Renegade/Graftgold
(071) 702 3643
£TBA Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 8086(!), EGA, 640K memory and can be run straight from the floppy disk.

ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards; a joystick.

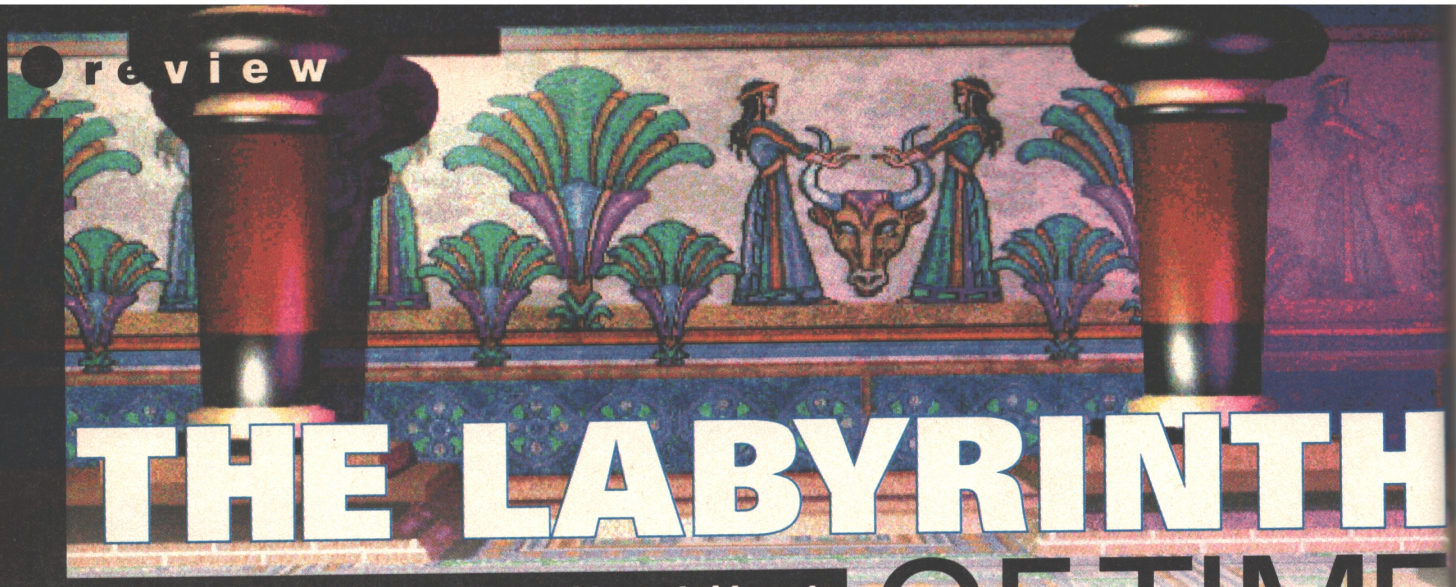
THE GOOD...

● It should deter people from converting any more Amiga games onto the PC.

...AND THE BAD

● Just about every element of the gameplay.

OVERALL 35%



THE LABYRINTH OF TIME

Faced as he is with negotiating history's biggest ever maze, Peter Fletcher stocks up on breadcrumbs and balls of string.

Recently things seem to have been getting better and better for adventure fans. In the last few months alone we've been treated to delights such as Return To Zork, Simon The Sorcerer and Day Of The Tentacle. But have you, I wonder, noticed a trend? How about if I say 'mini-movie'? Ah-ha, I see that glimmer of recognition in your eyes.

Yes, it's true - Hollywood seems to have invaded the games scene and it doesn't look like letting go, a phenomenon due partly, no doubt, to the fact that the majority of adventures come from America and the majority of those developers are based in California, home of Tinsel Town. Indeed, it's almost compulsory for adventure games now to feature digitised actors, be made from all manner of film-making techniques and, almost inevitably, to have less and less for the player to do apart from the watch the graphics.

● The menu of action icons stays intrusively on-screen at all times.

Which is why The Labyrinth Of Time is both surprising and refreshing, coming from a company that couldn't be closer to California without getting burnt by the fires but not containing any kind of movie influences short of a soundtrack (which, it has to be said, is truly stunning so I can't complain there). It's as close to the old style of adventure gaming as it can be, without using any of the annoying text inputting that seemed oh-so-fashionable not five years ago.

The plot (and this is an essential part of why computer games can be so much more than other forms of passive entertainment) just wouldn't work as a film, unlike other recent games. After all, it would be quite easy to see Guybrush Threepwood on the silver screen (Michael J. Fox would be perfect) and DOTT would be no harder to do than the Back To The Future trilogy. The Labyrinth Of Time, however, is a very different kettle of fish.

Apparently there's this maze, spanning both time and space, which is being used by an ancient king to gain access to other time periods, thus allowing him to conquer them. The maze's architect, Daedalus, fearful of the king's evil intent, uses his limited time-travelling powers to contact the nearest mortal, i.e. you, and charges you with the task of travelling the maze, discovering its secrets and ultimately destroying it - not an easy task by any means.

● The game's intro is depicted in drab black-and-white, reflecting your dull pre-adventure life.

Bizarre is definitely a word that springs to mind here. It's actually quite a good plot when you get into it, helped no end by the fantastic visuals and the even more stunning music. The only fault to be had is that the graphics don't scroll smoothly (or even at all) when you move - think of Eye Of The Beholder and apply it to a full-screen view and you'll get an idea of what it's like. The only other flaw with the game's mechanics is that the control method is a touch awkward and way too fussy. Obvious commands such as opening doors when you walk through them have to be done manually which gets very tiresome.

The only problem with the game's contents is that it isn't always obvious what can be used and what is just scenery. I was longing for a LucasArts-style item indicator to pop up in the text bar whenever the mouse passed something useable. Of course I would gladly open my own doors and search my own rooms by hand if it means quality plots and challenging gameplay and here Labyrinth scores in abundance. Labyrinth is an excellent adventure with a few technical flaws. Give it a go, you'll thank me for it.

● This good-looking chap is just one of the many amusing and informative people you get to talk to. By the way, *love* the suit...

THE LABYRINTH OF TIME

Electronic Arts/Terra Nova
(0753) 549442
£33.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 25MHz 386 PC with 2Mb of RAM, VGA and a CD-ROM drive.

ALSO SUPPORTS: Soundblaster soundcard; a mouse.

THE GOOD...

- Superb still illustrations and tear-inducing music.
- Extremely challenging adventure that's certain to last.
- Impressive atmosphere helps you overlook the flaws

...AND THE BAD

- No smooth or even semi-smooth scrolling.
- Difficult to work out what's going on and what objects are.
- Lots of unnecessary mouse clicking for obvious events.

OVERALL 85%

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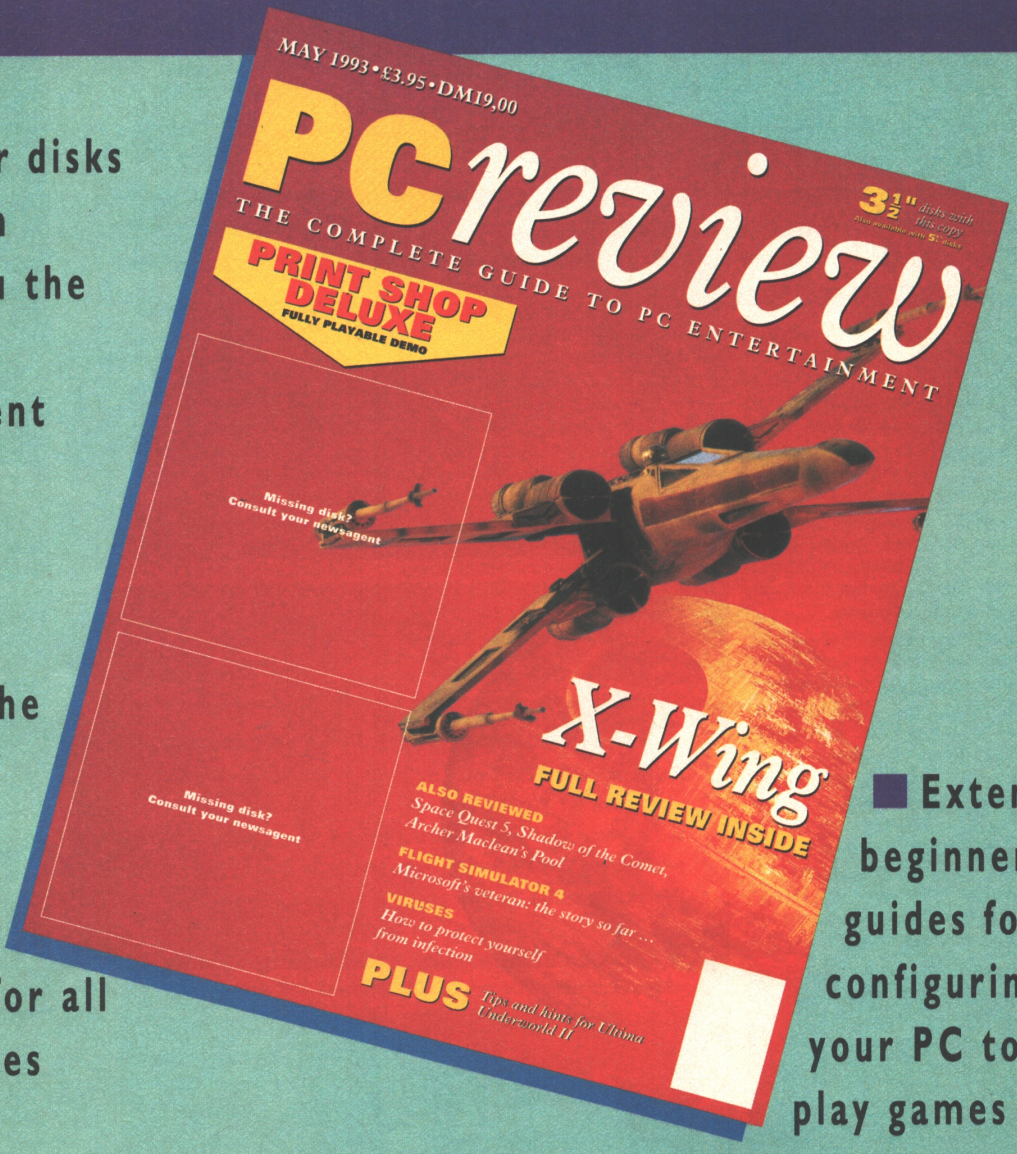

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BENEATH A STEEL SKY

Comics meet computers in Virgin's latest graphic adventure. "But is it a work of comic genius or is it a comic tragedy?" asks David Upchurch. (Clever, isn't he? Twisting the words around like that... No.)

These days it seems that every games developer and his wife is obsessed with adorning their latest releases with Hollywood-inspired trimmings. Indeed, movie-style intros, animated 'cut-away' sequences, digitised voices and such like are becoming so common-place that you almost feel cheated if your new game doesn't eat up half of your disk space with pretty but ultimately pointless bells and whistles.

Revolution have taken a slightly different approach with Beneath A Steel Sky, the follow-up to the well-received but flawed Lure Of The Temptress. Rather than turning to the world of films for their inspiration they've opted for the world of comics instead, employing Dave Gibbons as consultant and artist on the game. And as far as big names in the comic world go they don't get much bigger than Gibbons, one of Britain's most famous comic artists and the man responsible for, amongst many other titles, Give Me Liberty and the classic Watchmen.

To be honest, it's always been a mystery to me why developers haven't taken this route before. Computer games have always had closer links with comics and cartoons than films and this will always be the way until the technology evolves that allows photo-realistic worlds that can manipulated in real time. You need only compare the visual qualities of Street Fighter 2 and Mortal Combat for the proof of this - I know which one I find the more appealing to look at and to play.

So the big question is, of course, how has Gibbons' input affected the game? Well, not quite as much as you'd perhaps think or hope. Beneath A Steel Sky is certainly not the 'interactive comic' that Virgin is billing it as. What it is, however, is one of the best graphic adventures to have appeared this year, albeit a fairly traditional one with a few innovations here and there.

But before I put my big reviewer's hat on and start my critique (great word, that), let me don my Jackanory pullover and fill you in on the plot. You play Robert Foster, a mean, moody and quite magnificent specimen of manhood with a rather tragic history. Orphaned as a child, Foster (named after the popular lager, I kid you not) was adopted by a tribe of humans living in the Gap, a vast post-apocalyptic wasteland. Now grown to a man, he survives by scavenging for food and goods in the Gap's barren plains, but is constantly troubled by strange feelings of 'not belonging'.

One fateful day, a chopper full of troopers from the City arrives in the tribe's village. For some reason they want Foster to return with them - and they're not taking 'No' for an answer. Although Foster eventually agrees to go with them (to be honest he has little choice in the matter), the troopers massacre all the tribe's people. Things, however, do not go according to the troopers' plan. While over the City the chopper malfunctions and smashes into one of the City's many high-rise pavilions. Foster manages to escape... and the game begins.

Luckily Foster is not completely alone as he's managed to smuggle his little robot pal Joey along for the ride. Unfortunately, however, Joey is currently body-less and takes the form of a tiny and completely useless circuit board. So first Foster must find a new casing for his robotic companion before he can start, er, getting to the bottom of things, although, um, exactly what those 'things' are is, er, anybody's guess...

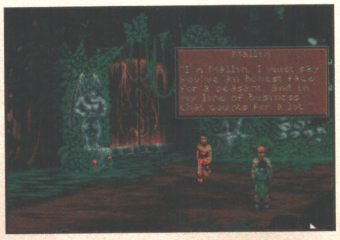
Now if all this sounds a little vague don't blame me, blame Revolution and Dave Gibbons. This plot I've just

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Revolution's first foray into the world of graphic adventures was Lure Of The Temptress which, while admirable in many ways, was distinctly lacking in the 'length' department. And while size isn't everything, as far as graphic adventures go it's really quite important. Thankfully, Beneath A Steel Sky is a great improvement on that game. For a start it's bigger, but also it's more complex and involving and even easier to play. In short, it's pretty excellent.

● One of Steel Sky's particularly nice features is the way you can spy on people through windows and see what they're up to.

Steel Sky improves on...



...Lure Of The Temptress.

IN THE BEGINNING...

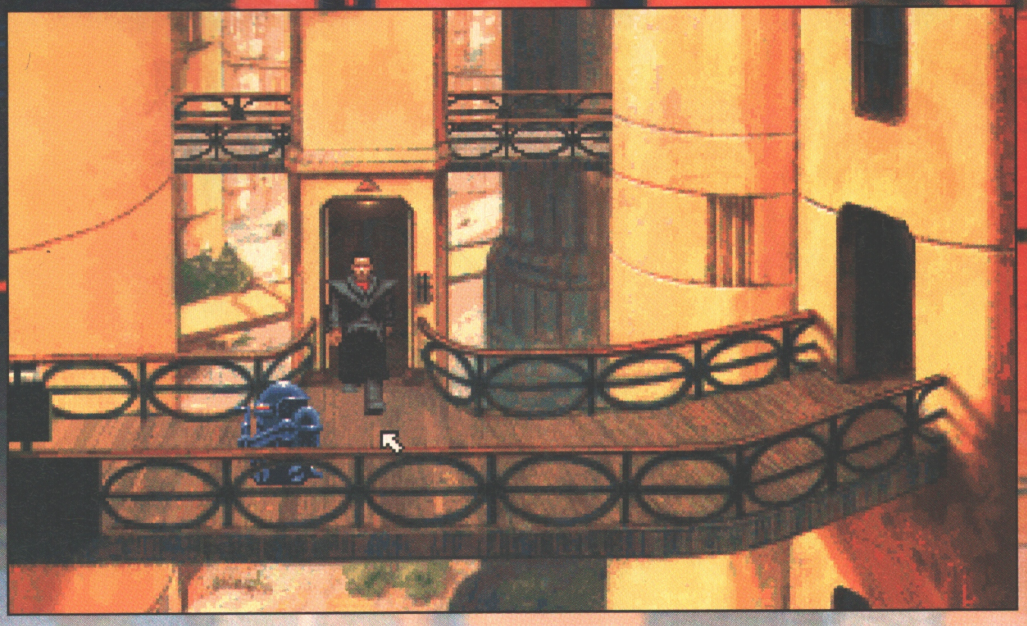
Okay, so you've read the comic you got with the game, which gives you the low-down on Foster's adbuction by the City's agents. Now load up the game and let the story continue...

The troopers' chopper flies high over the city, rotors whirring. Foster's on-board and he's looking for a way out, but he's not stupid enough to try an escape 20,000ft up in the air without even a handkerchief to help break his fall...

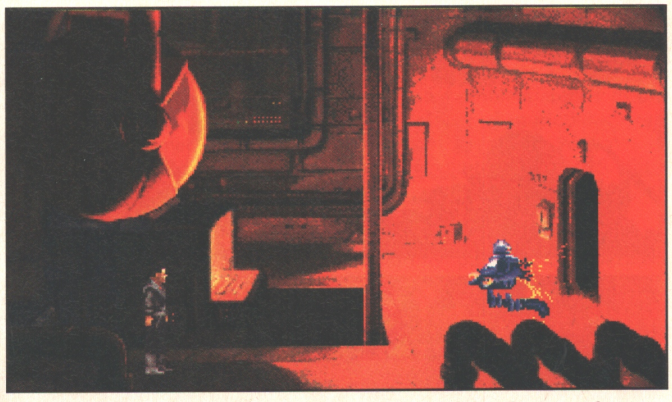
Uh-oh! Trouble! Someone or something is jamming the chopper's control system. There's little for Foster to do here apart from look very worried and hope that the chopper comes fitted with airbags...

Aaaiee! She's going down! The chopper performs a graceful, downwards arc - straight into one of the walkways connecting the City's many skyscraper-like buildings. Luckily it misses a factory and only hits a hospital...

Foster checks himself for bumps and bruises. Relief - he's alright! Seizing his chance to escape, Foster pegs it down the street. But he's not the only one who has survived the crash - Reich, one of chopper's troopers, gives chase...



● (Above and left) Although the graphics are initially grim and grimy, as you progress through the game, gradually working you way down to ground level, Foster's surroundings get slowly more high-tech.



● Early on in the game, Foster is cornered by one of the City's security agents and there seems to be no hope escape of escape. Suddenly, just as the agent is about to shoot, a bolt of laser fire emanates from the security camera and cuts him in half. Why? You'll have to find that out for yourself...

regurgitated is extracted from the attractive 8-page comic you get with the game (drawn by Gibbons, of course) and, to be frank, it tells you sod all. When you start the game you don't really know where you are, why you're there or what you have to do next. It soon transpires, however, that this is meant to be - it's only as you explore that your aims and your place in the grand scheme of things become apparent.

Now while, to begin with, this a bad thing - you're first fumbling steps with the game can be very frustrating as you have simply no idea what's going on - it eventually turns into a very good thing, as once you start to piece together the clues the game really gets its hooks into you and the urge to find out more and solve the mystery is intense.

One thing it's worth pointing out here is that, unlike most modern graphic adventures, there are places in Beneath A Steel Sky where it's possible for Foster to be killed, which (not unsurprisingly) ends the game. As far as I'm concerned this is A Good Thing, as it adds a great deal of tension to the proceedings and certainly encourages you to think about what you're doing rather than go for the 'blindly try every knob, button and switch you come across' approach. The only thing you've got to remember is to save your game regularly...

Graphically Beneath A Steel Sky is simply wonderful - you'd expect nothing less given the talents behind the game. Every location is beautifully drawn and incredibly detailed and they all feature loads of spot animations that bring them to life, making them far more than just attractive but dead backdrops.

This attention to detail is present in every aspect of the game, with even the most trivial of actions accompanied by an impressive animation - if you open a door, to give you a minor example, it'll slowly slide rather than just 'flick' open. These may sound like minor improvements but they make a big difference to your sense of involvement and the game's overall feel.

In fact, the only graphic downer is the animation of the various characters themselves. On the whole it's okay, but when they walk they only move full face-on or in profile and on top of that

The sector's power generators are guarded by this old curmudgeon. If only there were some way to get rid of him, you'd could get the lifts working.

This location is where Foster first hides himself. Although the exit to the main pavillion is guarded there *is* another way out - can you find it...?

Obviously nobody's got around to drawing a photo-fit of Foster, as these two security guards don't have an inkling that he's the escaped 'saboteur'.

they have this slightly stilted gait that looks, well, a bit silly. Certainly you feel that Foster at least should have a rather more purposeful stride, befitting his urgency to get out of the City.

Although I've side the game is tough to get into at first this is in no way due to the player interface, which is without a doubt one of the cleverest and most well-designed I've ever seen. There are no icons cluttering up the screen, allowing you to appreciate the graphics in all their full-screen glory, and every action possible is accessed via your two mouse buttons.

Basically the left mouse button is used to walk around and look at things (objects of interest are indicated when your pointer moves over them) and the right mouse button performs an action on it. The exact type of action is 'context sensitive' and depends upon the object and the situation you're in, so if it's a bar sticking out of the wall Foster will wrench it free or if it's a button Foster will press it.

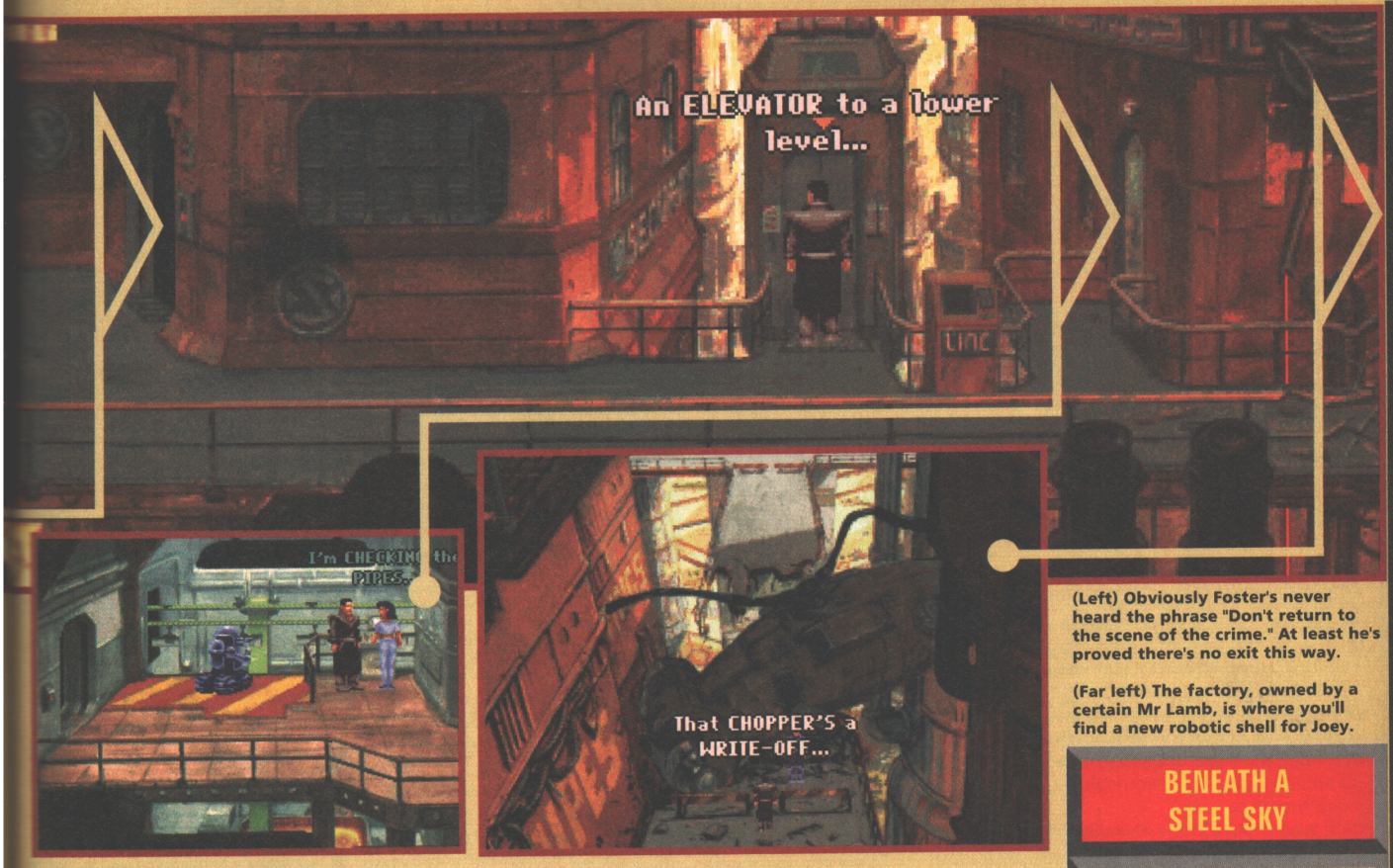
If an object is just lying around clicking on the right mouse button will also make Foster pick it up and add it to his inventory (like all graphic adventure heroes Foster seems to have bottomless pockets and can carry a a huge amount of junk). This inventory can be called up at any time by moving the pointer to the top of the screen, and items within it can be picked up and dragged around to use them on other objects.

It's just about as simple and easy to use as you could wish for. And the good thing is that, thanks to Revolution's cunning game design, this doesn't make the puzzles any easier to solve - it just takes the donkey work out of them.

And then, of course, there's Joey. Here's not just there for the little things in life, like making sarcastic comments every time you foul up or moaning about Foster's predicament, he's also an invaluable aid to puzzle solving and can be called upon to do things that Foster can't, such as give

● (Above left) Foster has an emotional reunion with his old pal Joey. This robotic companion is more than just a foil for your jokes, he's also an essential aid to solving some of the puzzles.

● (Left) By moving the mouse pointer up near the top of the screen the inventory is made to appear. Items can then be dragged off it and used on other things either in the inventory or on the screen.



(Left) Obviously Foster's never heard the phrase "Don't return to the scene of the crime." At least he's proved there's no exit this way.

(Far left) The factory, owned by a certain Mr Lamb, is where you'll find a new robotic shell for Joey.

a jump start to a transporter droid with a dodgy spark plug. Some puzzles require both Foster and Joey to be doing certain things at the same time, so a degree of co-ordination is required.

The City is full of strange characters to meet, and you can engage in a chat by simply clicking on them with the right mouse button whereupon, in familiar LucasArts' style, four or five statements and/or questions pop up that you can then choose between.

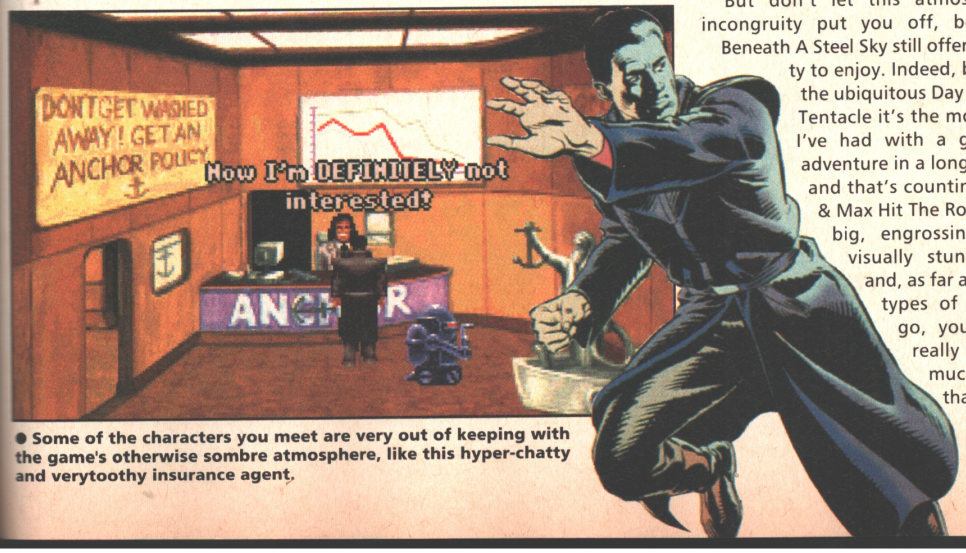
I have to admit I GOT a bit ANNOYED with THE way characters kept accenting THINGS in their SPEECH with capital LETTERS, even WHEN there was no real POINT. (See what I mean? Quite distracting, isn't it?) Now I don't mind this sort of thing now and again when it's used for effect but everybody in Beneath A Steel Sky talks like this all the time and it gets quite wearing, to be honest. Imagine someone constantly talking to you like that - it'd drive you nuts.

Actually, it's during the conversations that the game's only real failing becomes apparent, and that's the mismatch between the tone of visuals and that of the gameplay.

You see, all the conversations are written in a slightly jokey, light-hearted style which jars heavily with the grim, Blade Runner-ish style of the introductory comic book and the background graphics. And, to make matters worse, it's not as funny as Day Of The Tentacle. Okay, to be fair I wasn't expecting it to be - it's not that sort of game - and, of course, it would be deadly dull playing a game where every conversation is filled with angst and despair, but as it stands the mood simply isn't quite right.

The same problem applies to the various pieces of music which run throughout the game. As tunes in their own right they're great, but their slightly up-tempo jauntiness just doesn't fit.

But don't let this atmospheric incongruity put you off, because Beneath A Steel Sky still offers plenty to enjoy. Indeed, barring the ubiquitous Day Of The Tentacle it's the most fun I've had with a graphic adventure in a long time - and that's counting Sam & Max Hit The Road. It's big, engrossing and visually stunning - and, as far as these types of games go, you can't really ask for much more than that.



● Some of the characters you meet are very out of keeping with the game's otherwise sombre atmosphere, like this hyper-chatty and verytoothy insurance agent.

BENEATH A STEEL SKY

Virgin/Revolution
(081) 960 2255
£39.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 25Mhz 386 PC, VGA and 10Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib and Sound Blaster soundcards; a mouse.

THE GOOD...

- Brilliantly-devised and very easy-to-use player interface.
- Visually stunning with loads of incidental animations.
- Absorbing plot that'll keep you hooked for months.

...AND THE BAD

- Some incongruity in mood between the dialogue and the visuals.

OVERALL 89%

RALLY

Remember when Sainz and Moya snatched 1992 rally glory in their Toyota Celica? Nope, neither does Dean Evans but he revs his engine and disappears into the Welsh hills with Europress' Rally anyway.

Now is it just me or is rallying just not a stunningly inspiring sport? I mean let's face it, if you're going to reminisce about motor racing you tend to chat about old Nige being the greatest racing driver ever and how Mario Andretti was crap and just couldn't cut the Formula One mustard. Do people ever sit around and babble about rallying? I don't think so.

It seems to me that rallying is only really exciting when the cars crash and tumble down steep embankments. I'm not saying that I don't appreciate the skill it takes to drive at 90mph in complete darkness down a slender gravel road because I do, it's just that I have my reservations about how well it translates to the small screen. Yes, slamming a high performance car around a Welsh dirt track certainly sounds pretty exhilarating but - and this is a big 'but' - does Rally from Europress capture all the sheer bowel-moving excitement of it all?

Well... no, actually, it doesn't. Despite the fact that Rally lets you drive any one of five souped-up road cars, features some very clever photo-realistic scenery and is, claims Europress, a game that recreates every bend, dip and hump of the grueling 350-mile event, Rally is badly let down by it's shallow gameplay.

This is a game that sports the word 'limited' on its forehead. For starters there are only five basic controls (accelerate, brake, left, right and gear change) and unfortunately I found it nigh on impossible to skid my Ford Cosworth dramatically around the corners like rally cars are supposed to. Also, despite the auto braking and auto gear-changing my car refused to handle like a speedy roadster and suddenly took on the agility and manoeuvrability of a tank.

Sadly the sound is also nothing spectacular - the engine noise sounds more like a dying wasp trapped in a metal bucket rather than a growling V8 turbo-charged monster. However, if you have a Sound Blaster you do get to hear the voice of your co-driver who tells you in digitised tones what corners and obstacles you'll be encountering next, and when it rains you are treated to sampled sounds of thunder and pouring rain

Rally, it seems, attempts to do too much, desperately trying to occupy the middle ground between edge-of-the-seat arcade action and realistic simulation. As it stands it's an uneasy mixture of Formula One Grand Prix detail and Lotus Challenge arcade playability that doesn't work on either level, lacking sufficient realism to be a sim and needing more playability to be an arcade game.

The last nail in the coffin is hammered in by the nature of rally driving itself. You see the main problem with simulating a rally is that, although there will often be flashes of tremendous excitement, these are woefully brief. For most of the time you find you're racing against the clock not other people. I don't know about you but I find that racing on your tod doesn't really make for a wild or thrilling game.

If you're a serious, almost obsessive rally fan then Rally might just be worth a look. But if you want real driving action I suggest you leave your money in your wallet, scan a bitfurther down the shelf and check out Virgin's IndyCar Racing. Now that's what I call driving.

● At the beginning of each stage you can take a peek at the overall map, showing the Network Q rally route snakes its way up from Birmingham and around the north of England.

● Of course, in Rally you race in all weather conditions. Apart from dazzling sunshine you must brave the rigours of thunderstorms and driving snow.

● The designers filmed the various rally stages to recreate these scenic landscapes. Unfortunately, veering left and right, accelerating and braking doesn't make for much of a game.

● Unlike some other car sims, the cars your opponents drive are not polygon-based but drawn as sprites which is sadly less realistic.

● At night, the rally continues. When you get more confident you can turn off the course map and just rely on your co-driver's spoken instructions.

RALLY

Europress/In-house
(0625) 859333
£34.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 486 PC with 2Mb of RAM, VGA and 5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib, Sound Blaster and Sound Source soundcards; a mouse; an analogue joystick.

THE GOOD...

- Some nice detailed scenery and weather effects
- Good use of digitised speech

...AND THE BAD

- No realistic control over your car.
- Driving against the clock isn't entirely thrilling.
- It's only fun for about five minutes.

OVERALL 65%

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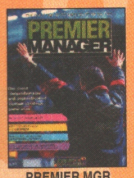

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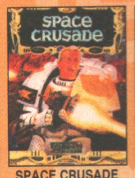

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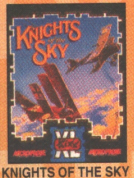

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INDYCAR

David Upchurch follows in the tyre marks of that great British hero Nigel Mansell with Virgin's cracking car game.

When Nigel 'Chatty' Mansell gave up Formula One racing for IndyCars I'm sure I wasn't the only person who thought he must have been one clutch short of a gear box. Okay, so the money may be better but where's the challenge and excitement in driving around a big oval for hours on end? I've done that trying to get out of Spaghetti Junction and, to be frank, it bored me rigid. But then maybe that's because the Junction's in Birmingham. (Apologies to any Brummies reading this. We love you really. - Lord EMAP.)

But having played IndyCar Racing, written by the same people who did the classic Indy 500, I can begin to see the attraction. For a start, my naive notion that all the tracks are oval shaped appears to be totally wrong. Many of them are as 'wiggly', if not wigglier (you can tell I'm a bit of a racing expert, can't you?), than the Grand Prix tracks, with lots of nice right-hand turns. Also, the IndyCars themselves are heavier and much more powerful than their F1 counterparts, which translates into much more exciting driving as you can bomb around the corners at far greater speeds. Of course, this also means accidents are more likely and potentially deadlier...

● If, like me, you thought racing was just about stamping down on the accelerator and steering left and right then think again. From your cockpit there are numerous levers that let you fiddle the car's brake bias and anti-roll bars and so subtly affect the car's performance during the race. Novices would be advised to leave them well alone, though.

Every high-octane thrill and spill of the real thing has been captured to perfection in IndyCar Racing. Of course, the first thing that strikes you about the game is the sheer gob-smacking beauty of its texture-mapped graphics. As you can see from the shots on this page these are really special and they whizz by at breath-taking rate, assuming you have a reasonably powerful PC, of course - if you don't it looks like a slideshow of someone's holiday snaps. This graphical excellence is maintained throughout every game screen - even the garage, normally the dullest-looking part of a racing game, looks good.

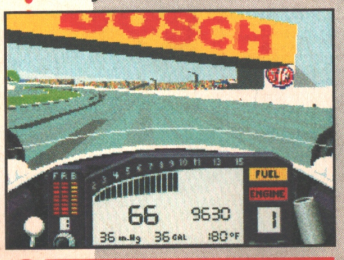
However, once the initial 'wow' factor has worn off you soon discover IndyCar Racing's incredible playability and flexibility. Unlike all-too-many games, IndyCar Racing is most definitely not just a pretty face. You can be out on the track within a few seconds of loading up the game and, depending on how you configure it, you can play it either as a simple five-minute time waster or as a comprehensive and detailed sim.

So, if you fancy some quick arcade action then from the comprehensive options screen you can reduce the length of the race (a full race can last anything from two to three hours, so if you opt for that make sure you've set aside a spare afternoon), make your car invincible to damage and set the gears on auto. Then you can get straight out on the track, stick the pedal to the metal and clunk and crash your way around without a care in the world.

On the other hand, if you want to do it 'properly' you can set all the realism options to max and include everything from variable weather conditions, the authentic but slightly dull pace lap and yellow flags, which pop up if there's been a major accident and

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

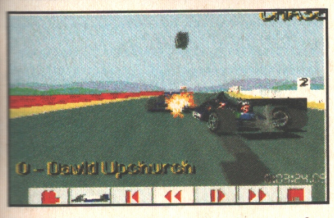
Up until now MicroProse's Formula One Grand Prix has been the pinnacle of PC racing but, I fear, those days are over. In terms of a simulation there's not a lot to choose between them but in terms of a game that's great fun to play then IndyCar Racing wins hands down, mainly because of the superbly detailed graphics and the excellent action replay facility. The only problem with IndyCar Racing is that it's not a motor racing sport that we Brits are too familiar with but - hey! - don't fear the stranger!



Hello IndyCar Racing...

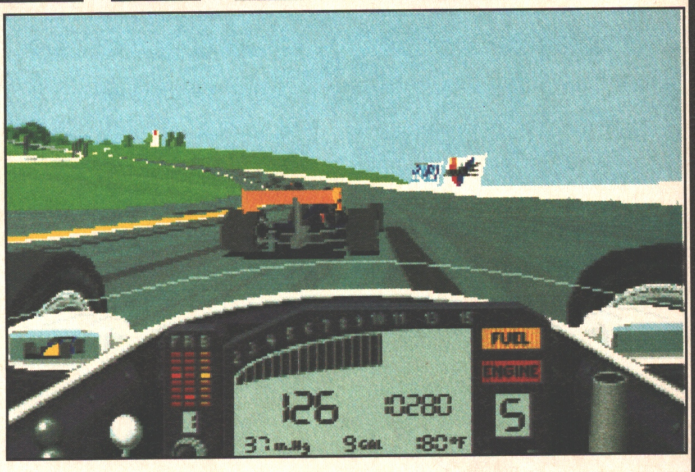
...and goodbye F1GP!

RACING



● Ah, the marvellous 'replay' mode. The control panel is very video recorder-ish, allowing you to fast forward, rewind or pause the action at any time. You can also freely swap between the cameras and the cars until you get just the view you've been looking for.

● In most racing games the garage section is dull, dull, dullity-dull. But not in Indycar Racing! As you move from, say, changing the tyres to adjusting the wings, the car swings around in front of you in glorious 3D, the view zooming in on the bit of the car you want to adjust. Smart!



● If you've got a serial cable it's possible for two PCs to be linked together so that you can play head-to-head with a chum. Alas, here at What PC Games we haven't so we couldn't but we're sure that it's brilliant. No, really. Virgin told us so.

force you to reduce speed and not overtake for a while. This gives the marshals time to wipe the blood off the track without getting run over. However, I say they knew the risks when they took the job so keep this option off and the accelerator down.

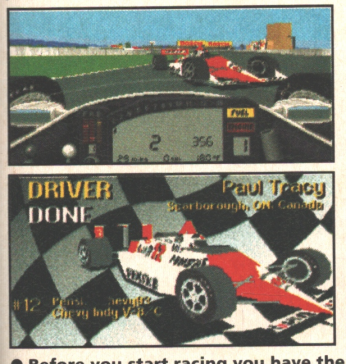
Once you've stopped fiddling with your options (and you really should, you know - you might go blind) you can actually get down to some serious - or maybe not-so-serious - racing. Again, it's choices a-go-go time, with the player able to partake in a one-off race on any of the game's eight pan-American tracks or, for the more ambitious, compete in the full Championship Season, complete with warm-up laps and qualifying sessions, where each track is raced sequentially and points awarded after every race depending on each car's final position.

For those keen on perfecting their driving technique there's also the 'pre-season testing' option. This basically means you get to practice on any of the tracks without having any other cars to crash into, er, avoid. At any time you can jump out of your car and straight into the garage (an impressive athletic feat, I think you'll agree), where you can alter your car's tyres, wings, suspension, gearing and, ooh, just about everything.

Each track makes differing demands on your car, and it's here in the garage that you can tailor your car to get the optimum performance out of it. Of course, you can ignore all this nuts-and-bolts tinkering if you're just playing for fun, but if you dream of Championship victory then you'll have to get your fingers dirty under the bonnet sooner or later.

However, one of the game's best features I've saved until last. You see, at any time during the race you can pause the game and go into 'action replay' mode, allowing you to watch the last few moments of action from a vast number of in-car-, blimp- and trackside-mounted cameras and even from your rivals' vehicles. This will be most appreciated by those ghoulish types who enjoy Casualty or slow down and gawp when driving past major road accidents, as it allows you to savour those spectacular crashes at leisure. Indeed, there are some players who deliberately cause multi-car pile-ups on the starting grid just so that they can watch it again - and again and again - on the replay.

But not me - I'm a nice boy. I'm just here for the racing. And what great racing it is - IndyCar Racing feels so real you can almost smell the methanol leaking dangerously from the fuel tank. In fact, it's all so authentic that I actually started to grow a bushy moustache and develop a droning voice. But the best thing about the game is that the realism hasn't been allowed to throttle the fun. Whether you're after arcade action or serious simulation, IndyCar Racing will fulfil your needs completely.



● Before you start racing you have the option of changing your car's chassis and engine type, if you so wish. From here you can also have a sneaky peek at your rivals' chassis/engine combinations, information that experienced drivers might be able to use to their advantage during the race. Or, then again, maybe not.

● When you visit a new track you're treated to this attractive view of it from the air and given a load of stats. While some of this information is useful - the length of the track will help you judge when to make pitstops, for example - the best way to get to know a course is to actually drive on it.

INDYCAR RACING

Virgin/Papyrus

(081) 960 2255

£TBA Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 25Mhz 386 PC with 2Mb of memory, VGA and 12Mb of hard disk space

ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland soundcards; a mouse; a joystick

THE GOOD...

- Spectacular graphics create a superb feeling of 'being there'.
- Incredibly playable and friendly.
- Totally brilliant whether played as a 'proper' sim or just for fun.

...AND THE BAD

- You really need a 486 to see the game at its best.
- The IndyCar sport isn't that well-known over here.

OVERALL 94%

CYBER RACE

Cal Jones likes to think that she's a fast and dangerous woman. Just to humour her, we let her review CyberRace.

It was pure mayhem. Everyone was jostling for space, tempers were getting shorter by the minute and it could only be a matter of time before things began to get violent. What could I do? I had no choice but to defend myself. After a brief struggle I finally emerged from the vehicle leaving a trail of bruised and battered bodies behind me.

But never mind my journey to work on the London Underground. As soon as I loaded up CyberRace, I knew that I was going to be in for an even tougher time. Cyberdreams' latest release is a futuristic racing game, set against the backdrop of a huge intergalactic war between two rival factions, the Terrans (us), and the Kaladasians (evil alien scum). To prevent any further devastation, the galactic council has ordered the two enemies to abandon war and settle their sordid little conflict on the cyber track.

You play Clay "Thank God I wasn't christened Rick" Shaw, top Terran racer and son of ace pilot John Shaw. When John is blown away during a race by his arch-enemy Mugyor, Clay decides to hang up the old crash hat and quit. Or so he thinks. The Terran Emperor decides otherwise, and kidnaps Clay's girlfriend to give him that little extra incentive to get back on the cyber track. If Clay wins a race he gets to hold hands with her for a few minutes, but if he fouls up they'll drag her off to the torture chamber. And I thought the Terrans were the good guys.

● My God, they're everywhere! Time to clear some space with the aid of a few missiles. You're able to carry a vast amount of weapons on your sled and can swap between them whenever you wish with a few taps on the spacebar.

Obviously the general idea is to win races. Each race takes place over a vast, barren, rocky landscape (even the ones that are supposed to be set in a lush and verdant jungle). The first person to complete ten laps wins, whereupon the race ends. The rest of the competitors are awarded points according to how much of the track they manage to cover, so if you win you'll get loads of points, but if you spend the race hiding behind a strategically placed rocky outcrop you won't get a bean.

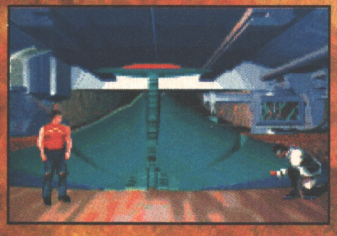
"But isn't that a bit tame?" I hear you ask. Well no, actually. Each sled in armed with missiles, mines and various other instruments of death, which you buy using the points won in the races and can then be used to blast, er, gently persuade your opponents to leave the course - subtlety is not a major asset in this game. Naturally, everyone's gunning for you, too. Your sled can survive a certain amount of damage before it conks out, but take any more hits and you're dead meat.

So how do you avoid getting hit? That's simple. The course is indicated by two rows of holographic dots which you're supposed to fly between. But there's nothing to stop you flying off course, and when someone plonks a dirty great mine in your path there's really nothing else you can do.

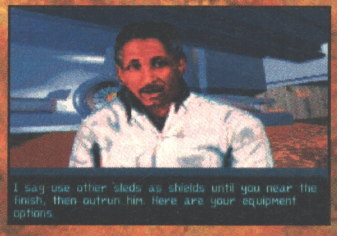
● Blue skies, fluffy white clouds, whopping great big pixels. Although CyberRace may not look too hot when static (it looks like one of those models built out of Lego, if you ask me) it's a lot nicer moving, especially if you've got a 486 PC.

CyberRace isn't just a race game, though, it's also a soap opera - so soapy, in fact, that you can almost see the bubbles. Between races you get to watch lots of digitised footage of 'resting' actors discussing tactics. There are two reasons for this: first to show you how the story is progressing, and second so that you can go to the bar, get drunk, chat to aliens and spend your winnings on black market upgrades for your sled or getting a shady character to sabotage your rivals. You can also equip your vehicle in the pits, which is cheaper but means that you won't get

A DAY AT THE RACES



No, this isn't a giant iron - it's your hi-tech streamlined racing machine. That is what you'll be driving in a minute.



Chat to your friendly but slightly gormless-looking pit boss to get advice on race tactics, the course and which weapons to choose.

The first lap is always complete mayhem, but gives you plenty of opportunity to blast those no-good Kaladasian scum to bits.

Got one! If I keep going at this rate I might actually stand a chance of finishing the race in one piece. That'd be nice.

your hands on the new technology until later in the game.

At the start you don't really need anything fancy - just a few homing missiles, mines, lasers and light armour. But the later races are much tougher and you'll be at a serious disadvantage unless you have the more advanced equipment. The trouble is, do badly in your early races and you'll not have enough cash to buy decent upgrades and your sled will soon become uncompetitive.

The actual racing side of things is pretty good fun. I know that violence has become somewhat unfashionable these days, but it's enormously satisfying delivering a large missile up your enemy's tail pipe. There's plenty of frantic dogfighting action to get the adrenaline going, especially during the chaotic early laps. If you can avoid being one of the early casualties, you can get down to the business of racing and taking out anything that gets in your way.

The graphics are really a matter of taste. If you like the look of games like Novalogic's Comanche: Maximum Overkill, you'll probably think that CyberRace is quite impressive. If you stand about five feet away from your monitor and squint it looks very nice indeed, but get any closer and you start to notice the large, fuzzy pixels which make up the screen. The overall impression is quite pleasing, though, especially considering that you'll be far too busy racing to indulge in any aesthetic appreciations of the landscape.

The visuals are the result of a collaboration between Cyberdreams and Syd Mead, the film designer who has worked on Alien and Bladerunner. He designed the vehicles and many of the between-race interior sequences. With credentials like these, CyberRace really ought to look exceptional, but although I thought it looked fine, some of my colleagues were less than impressed. As I say, it's a matter of taste.

If CyberRace has one glaring weakness, it's longevity. I managed to win a race after only a couple of goes, so I don't imagine it would take anyone too long to finish the game. If you don't mind spending £45 on less than a week's play, then fine. Just don't expect it to keep you entertained forever.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

CyberRace is an epic tale of romance set against the violent backdrop of a futuristic fight for power between two warring space empires. Sounds dramatic, eh? Let us meet some of the star players...

This is you, the heroic Clay Shaw. A handsome chap, ain't ya? And judging by his dress, it looks like tank tops are going to make a comeback in the future. Who said the future looks bleak?

Poor old Alyssia, your girlfriend, has a hell of a lot to put up with in this game. Held captive in a big bubble there's not a lot for her to do all day apart from look forward to the next dose of shock therapy if Clay loses.

Dobbs may give the orders round here, but can you trust a guy with a suit like that? Since he's partly involved in the efforts to blackmail you into racing it's probably best not to.

Your mechanic is always ready with a bit of advice on the upcoming race. Whether you listen to it or not is up to you but of all the characters you meet he's about the only one you can trust.

Old novelty condom head here is actually called Freckles, of all things. He spends his time hanging around the futuristic equivalent of the Rover's Return and you can pay him to sabotage the enemy sleds.

Finally we come to Mugyor, the Mr Nasty of the cyber track - you can probably tell that by his demonic-looking horns. Some years back he killed your father in a race, and now it's time for revenge...

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

CyberRace isn't a lot like anything, to be honest - there's nothing quite like it around at the moment. There are lots of racing games and combat games around but very few that combine the two. Comanche: Maximum Overkill has you flying helicopters rather than hovering above a racetrack in your sled, but the element of combat is there and it uses similar graphic techniques. Of the two I prefer CyberRace, but in both cases long-term playability is somewhat lacking.

Is it Comanche...

...Or is it Cyberrace?

CYBERRACE

Cyberdreams/In-house
(071) 328 3267
£44.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 33 Mhz 386 PC with 4Mb of memory, VGA and 25Mb of hard disk space

ALSO SUPPORTS: Sound Blaster and Adlib soundcards; a mouse; a Thrustmaster joystick

THE GOOD...

- Great fun for lovers of violence.
- Lots of very fast and very furious action.
- Impressive Syd Mead inspired visuals

...AND THE BAD

- The appeal may be short-lived.
- Chugs on anything less than a 486.

OVERALL 75%

A few more lucky shots and I've demolished the opposition. It's easy to finish first when your the only sled left in the race.

As a reward for wining the Emperor lets you see your girl. Once that's over and done with, it's back to the bar for a celebratory booze up.

You've got to admire Sierra. Once they find a winning formula, they stick to it like glue. Kings Quests 1-6, Space Quests 1-5, Police Quests 1-4... not even the wildest of wild horses can drag them away from their deep and enduring love of the sequel.

Aces Over Europe is one such sequel, namely the long-awaited follow-up to the highly praised Aces Of The Pacific. AOTP itself was a huge success mixing both the hefty 'flight sim' (realistic flight models, weapon jams, limited fuel, etc) and the less involved 'flight game' (left, right, up, down, shoot) into one package. As a result AOTP was highly playable. It worked on a number of levels, was easy to use and was so highly polished you could almost see your face in it. Aces Over Europe hopes to recapture and emulate some of this heady success.

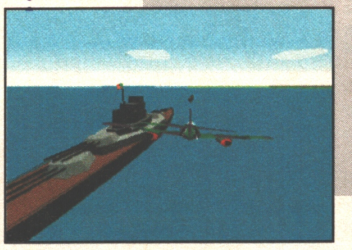
Aces Over Europe (AOE) is set slap-bang in the middle of the European continental war. It's April 1944, Vera Lynn is singing on the radio and things are hotting up as the Germans start to threaten the English coast. Unfortunately, rousing renditions of "Roll out the barrel" and "My old man's a dustman" won't stop the mighty Luftwaffe. Only courage, daring and the unlimited ammo option stand any sort of a chance.

Yep, it's close-up, nose-to-tail dog-

He likes to think he can fly, so we sent Dean Evans back to 1944, made him grow a handlebar moustache and stuck him in a Spitfire to join those famous Aces Over Europe.

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

Well, obviously Aces Over Europe bears comparison to its forbear Aces Of The Pacific. But I'd like to take this opportunity to take another peek at Pacific Strike due next year from Origin. Using the basic Strike Commander engine, Pacific Strike promises the same visual excellence but with much more gameplay. With slower planes, it should be much more fun to fly, the dogfighting will be better and as it's over the sea you can pretty much ignore ground detail. Sounds much better.

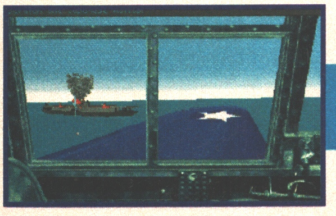


Buy AOE now...?

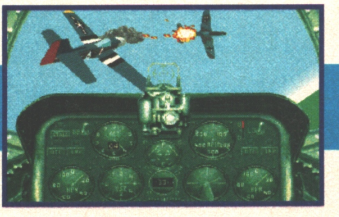
...Or wait for Pacific Strike?

ACES OVER

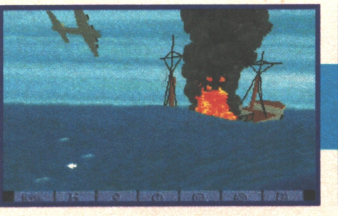
THE ACES ROADSHOW GOES TO...



Aces Of The Pacific won rapturous applause for its easy-to-use interface and frantic gameplay. In AOTP you got to fly a variety of American aircraft in the middle of the war against the Japanese.



Aces Over Europe gets a slight ripple of applause for carrying on the fine Aces tradition. It looks a lot like AOTP, flies a lot like AOTP but has Spitfires, Mustangs and ME-109's instead. Er, that's about it.

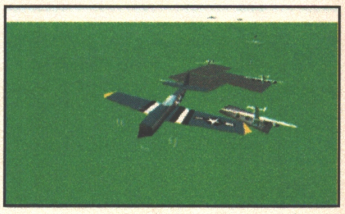


Aces Of The Deep? Do you sense that maybe Dynamix are running out of ideas? Has perhaps their Executive Computer Game Namer been sacked? This time you're an Ace in a sub. Implausible or what?

Yawn, Aces Over Korea is pencilled in for sometime in 1995. You are an Ace, you fly over Korea, blah, blah. It'd better have SVGA, texture mapping, speech and real world landscapes, that's all I can say.

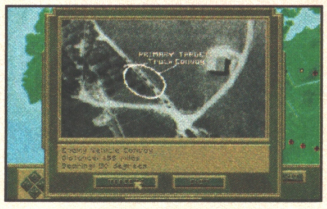
fight time. Get your plane in the air, fly to the target, bomb it, strafe it or protect it and then return home before your fuel runs out. It's all pretty routine stuff and if you've never played a flight sim in your life you couldn't start your flying career off with a more user-friendly game. Like Aces Of The Pacific, Aces Over Europe caters for veteran and novice alike and has some of the most frantic and enjoyable combat of any sim I've played.

The combat must be good because unfortunately the ground detail is absolutely terrible. I hoped it would improve on Aces Of The Pacific but sadly it hasn't. The Gouraud-shaded aircraft look fabulous but France is now little more than one huge green field that's as flat as a pancake. This is an old-looking sim and it does help enormously if you can fool yourself into believing that the clusters of green polygons are actually hills, that the white blocks are clouds and the dark grey lines are major continental



● (Left) There's a huge variety of missions and a huge variety of aircraft. As the war progresses so new planes become available. For example towards the end of the war, the jet-powered German ME-262 came into service.

● (Below) Not all the missions are offensive. Here I'm leading a four-man flight escorting some Liberator bombers over north-west France.



● (Far left) Aces over Europe now gives you the option to view a high altitude reconaissance photo of your target. Here HQ have pinpointed an undefended truck convoy...

● (Left) Minutes later and I'm diving down on the convoy, strafing the trucks with my dual .50 calibre guns. Incoming bandits, where?

EUROPE

highways. After playing TFX and Strike Commander, I'm finding it increasingly difficult.

But if you can ignore the ground critique, what makes Aces Over Europe stand out from the crowd is its sheer playability. AOE is very well thought out game and like AOTP its big selling point lies in its multitude of options.

Aces Over Europe allows the pilot to adjust the flight model and combat level. For example, if you aren't a master flyer and favour fun over realism you can turn off the engine burnouts, the gun jams and the realistic controls, flick on 'Unlimited ammo' and 'No damage' and shoot things down in complete safety. And if you want the ultimate in Spitfire realism, simply turn all the options on.

In AOE you can choose to fly either a single mission, start a career, view the aircraft models, use the mission recorder or to dogfight an Ace. The missions are extremely varied and range from simple combat air patrols to escorting bombers and striking enemy shipping. You can even fly historically accurate missions, smashing V1 rocket sites and clearing the skies over the Channel.

But AOE really comes to life when you choose the Career option. Having picked your favourite air force, you are posted to an airfield and chucked into the war at the deep end. From your new airbase you'll fly missions in sequence. If you succeed you'll go onto the next, get promoted and may even end up leading the squadron. Fail and you'll either get captured or you won't be coming back at all.

But unfortunately, despite the visual tweaks and in-game enhancements, Aces Over Europe does nothing really new and exciting in terms of actual gameplay - i.e. the bit that really matters. But for those of you who are keenly interested, Dynamix have added more incidental animations, historically accurate squadron colour markings, aircraft spins, varying stall speeds, target information and recon photos and a whole host of new planes and ground vehicles.

All of this is highly commendable but when a game turns up with little more than a new visual look or a reworked icon interface, frankly I'm not interested. It's like reworking the graphics, rereleasing an old game and sticking 'Deluxe' on the box.

● It can all get highly frantic. There you are diving on a helpless shipping convoy and one of your own Mosquitos nearly crashes into your cockpit. Get out of the way!

I don't blame Dynamix for sticking with the AOTP formula because AOTP was, and still is, a damned fine game. But notice the use of the word "was" here. Over a year has passed since that game's release and since then flight sim technology has moved on quicker than a cheetah strapped to a rocket pack.

There are so many flight sims out there that look so much better than this. TFX is years ahead and the forthcoming Pacific Strike looks absolutely stunning. I still can't fault the Aces presentation, but somehow the basic game engine lacks the necessary technological polish. Put it this way, if TFX is a antique mahogany table, so Aces over Europe is a £13.75 wicker foot-stool from MFI. It all looks too old. I don't want a flat green landscape any more, I want hills and valleys, towns and villages. I want to feel that I'm flying, I want to be immersed.

Between you and me, I found it all rather dull. Aces Over Europe didn't reach out and grab me, shake me by the shoulders and shout "Look at me. I can do this". I've seen all this before with Aces Of The Pacific and the slightly better graphics don't add anything to the gameplay. Of course if you've never played Aces Of The Pacific, forget everything I've just said because Aces Over Europe might just be a good first-time buy.

As for me, I'll be sticking with TFX and Pacific Strike. AOE is a let-down.

ACE OVER EUROPE

Sierra/Dynamix
(0734) 303322
£44.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 25MHz 386 PC with 2Mb of RAM, VGA graphics and 14Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib, Sound Blaster and Roland sound cards; a mouse; a joystick

THE GOOD...

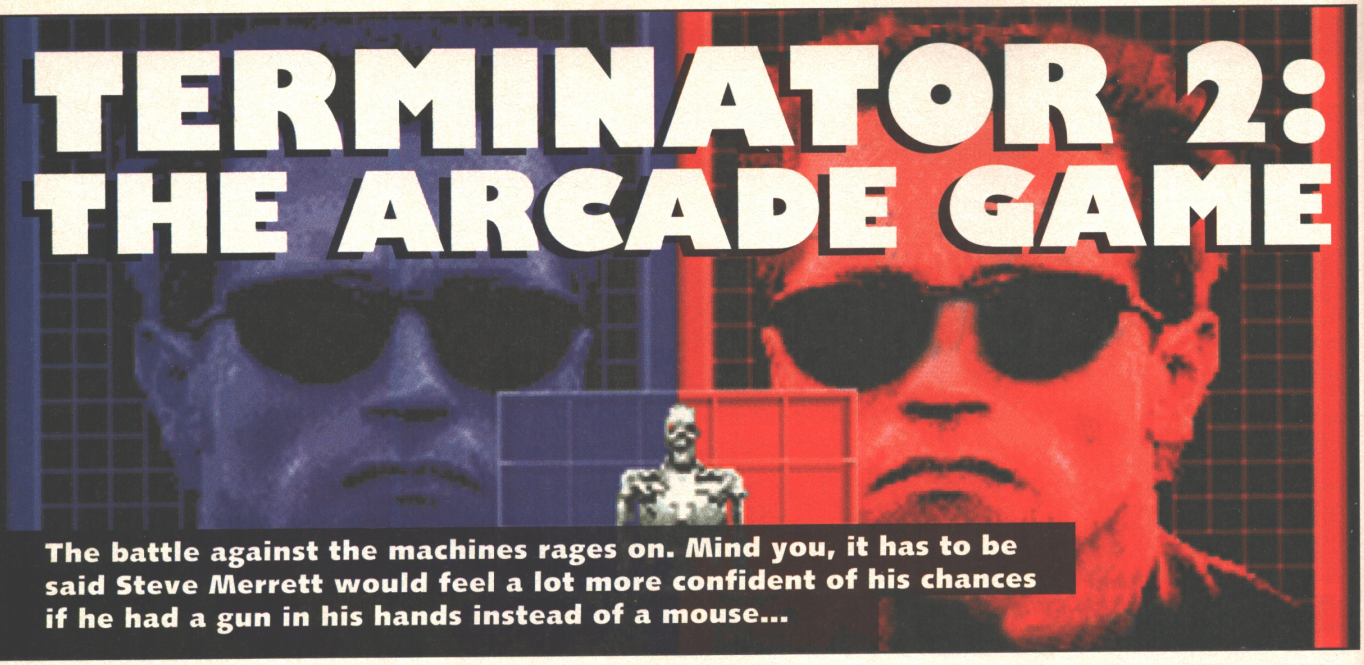
- Boasts the best dogfighting of any World War Two sim.
- Part game, part sim, AOE is very user-friendly.

...AND THE BAD

- Bar some higher res graphics little has changed from AOTP.
- Almost no effort has been made to draw some ground detail.
- Looks positively archaic - Pacific Strike it ain't.

OVERALL 73%

TERMINATOR 2: THE ARCADE GAME



The battle against the machines rages on. Mind you, it has to be said Steve Merrett would feel a lot more confident of his chances if he had a gun in his hands instead of a mouse...

August 29th, 1996. Cyberdyne Systems' greatest creation, the Skynet governmental mainframe, becomes self-aware. Within minutes it has targeted most of Russia with its nuclear warheads. Realising the danger, the Soviets return fire and the resultant devastation - which became known as Judgment Day - virtually eradicates the human race, allowing Skynet and its band of Terminator warriors to seize control.

However, one surviving band of freedom fighters are a constant thorn in Skynet's metallic side and, realising the rebel leader, John Connor, could end its reign, Skynet sends two Terminators back to destroy either John's mother, Sarah, or the rebel leader as a child.

The first Terminator was destroyed in 1984, whilst the second must battle with a rebel-controlled T800 before it can secure Skynet's future. The battle for the future is about to begin, and your seemingly inoffensive PC is about to play a key part.

A conversion of the coin-op, Terminator 2 is a multi-stage, Operation Wolf-style blast with the player cast as Arnie the friendly Terminator. Using the mouse, joystick or keys to control an cursor, the basic aim of the game is to ensure John Connor's safety by blasting bad guys in a series of scenes from the film.

Thus, starting in Los Angeles, 2026, you must beam back to present-day LA and find young John before the liquid metal T1000 gets to him - granted it's not going to win any awards for its depth or originality, but even so T2 is a bit of a cracker.

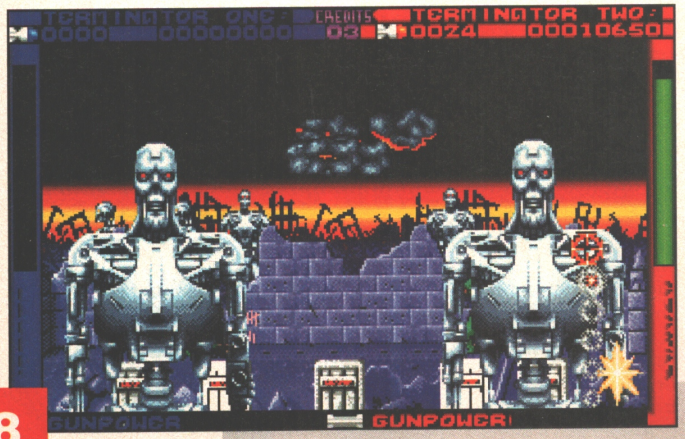
They say that the simple things in life are often the best, and Virgin's conversion is testament to this. As the assorted Endoskeletons parade before you with their guns blazing, it's terrific fun blasting them into pieces - literally! Their heads fly off, limbs are lost, and basically this is grisly entertainment at its very best.

In addition, the main problem with Operation Wolf and its many clones is one of repetition - a downside which hardly ever rears its ugly head in T2. Yes, the action may indeed be limited to picking off all manner of bad guys in what is basically a glorified shooting gallery but, let's face it, T2 is a stunning film and to be even a small part of its events is going to be a blast.

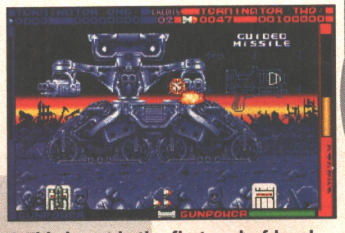
Every level of the game takes you through a key sequence taken from the film, culminating in a show-down with the T1000 in the steel mill. Of all the sections this final stage is by far the most impressive.

On entering the steel mill, the overturned Nitrogen container acts as a backdrop as the T1000 launches its first attack. Okay, so this doesn't sound particularly exciting, but whenever the container is holed by a stray shot, freezing liquid spurts from the freshly-created hole, immobilising the molten bad guy and allowing the player to whittle away his energy reserves - tying in with the film's action scenes perfectly.

This attention to detail is present throughout the game and whilst T2 won't win Virgin any awards in terms of advances of gameplay, it proves to be one of the better arcade conversions AND licences the PC has seen - and it's playable to boot. And that's good enough for me...



● T2 can either be played alone or simultaneously with a mate, in which case each player has their own side of the screen to protect.



● This beast is the first end-of-level guardian - and he takes ages to kill.

TERMINATOR 2

Virgin/Probe
(081) 960 2255
£35.99 Out Now

MINIMUM SPECS: 25MHz 386, VGA and 1.5Mb of hard disk space.

ALSO SUPPORTS: Adlib, Soundblaster and Roland soundcards; a joystick; a mouse.

THE GOOD...

- Links very closely with the film.
- Some excellent graphical touches.
- Blatant destruction has never been so much fun!

...AND THE BAD

- It won't win any awards for originality.
- Perhaps a tad overpriced for what it offers.
- The keyboard controls leave a lot to be desired.

OVERALL 80%

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SAM & MAX HIT THE ROAD

Can LucasArts do nothing wrong? Are they leading charmed lives? Dean Evans grabs his bag of rhetorical questions and heads out on the road with Sam and Max to investigate.

"It looks like a potentially dangerous hostage situation, Max." A dog in a suit and a white rabbit with a grin wider than the Channel, confront an evil scientist. "Sic him", says the dog and the rabbit leaps into action. A brutal cartoon fight follows - "Oooh!", "Oww!", "Ugh!" - and within seconds the rabbit is victoriously holding aloft the scientist's head. "He's not a real guy, Sam," squawks the rabbit excitedly and you don't need to be Sherlock Holmes to see that there's a cleverly disguised time bomb in its skull. And it's ticking...

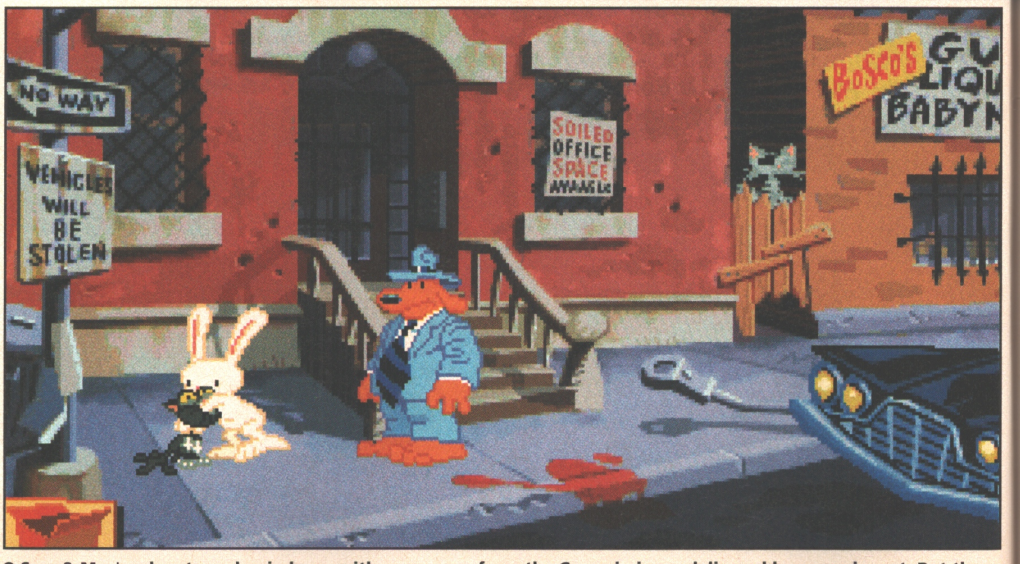
Yes indeed, the superb animated intro, the blatant disregard for reality and the digitised speech can only mean one thing. Ladies and gentlemen, the LucasArts' roadshow is back in town and is poised to sell you yet another top-flight, high-quality graphic adventure. No, it isn't Maniac Mansion 3 but a little gem called Sam and Max Hit the Road.

Sam and Max are LucasArts' newest adventure heroes, a successful dog and rabbit crime-fighting duo inspired and based on the popular "Sam and Max Freelance Police" comic books created by artist and writer Steve Purcell. These guys are Calvin and Hobbes with authority, Tom and Jerry with a badge, and they fit neatly in to an absurdist world of Bigfoot conventions, bizarre Molemen and pigeons who drink beer. If you've seen Who Framed Roger Rabbit you'll know the sort of world I'm talking about here. If you haven't, just take a modern America, combine it with all the culty, weird strangeness of California, twist it a bit more and you end up with Sam and Max.

So is Sam and Max the adventure that will sneak past Day of the Tentacle, dump Simon the Sorcerer in the waste-basket and drive Beneath A Steel Sky for four through extra cover? Could it possibly go twelve rounds with Monkey Island and win on points? Well, the answers are maybe not, yes and yes and yes, in that order.

So what's the story? Are there any megalomaniac purple tentacles hanging around, the odd pirate maybe, a dragon? Er, no. There is a dragon actually but it's so deeply imbedded in the story that it will take you a good long while to unearth it. Ah the story, an adventure game is nothing without a rollicking good narrative and Sam and Max is no exception. But like Tentacle, don't expect it to include much sense of normality.

After the pleasantly understated credits, it (the plot) all starts innocently enough. After tracking down the mad scientist in the intro, Sam and Max return to their humble office to check their phone messages. As luck would



● Sam & Max's adventures begin here, with a message from the Commissioner delivered by a courier cat. But the cat has swallowed the note, so Max volunteers to hunt for it - by sticking his paw down the cat's throat.

have it the Commissioner calls and Sam and Max are told of the mysterious disappearance of Bruno the Bigfoot and Trixie the Giraffe-Necked Girl from the Kushman Brothers Carnival.

Gallantly they take on the case. But as our animal heroes zoom towards the Carnival, little do they realise that this is only the beginning of a bizarre investigation that will take them right across America. From coast to coast, sea to shining sea. Sam and Max will pass through every tacky, two-bit tourist trap around, including The World's Largest Ball of Twine, The Celebrity Vegetable Museum and the Mount Rushmore Prehistoric Bungee Cavalcade (with novelty tar-pit slide).

Nothing stops the Freelance Police and almost nothing stands in the way of justice. I say "almost" because rumour has it that a huge pile of fat, corpulent donuts bloated with gallons of artificially flavoured jelly might just do the trick. But as I say, it's only a rumour.

Anyway, if you're familiar with Day of the Tentacle (and these days who isn't?) you'll probably love Sam and Max Hit the Road. Sam and Max features a similar visual style, excellent animation and a funky soundtrack to boot. Like Tentacle it's packed with verbal and visual humour but the technology has moved on and the SCUMM game interface has been tweaked.

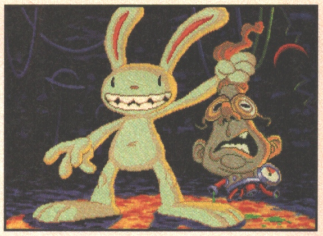
As the adventure begins you take control of the besuited gumshoe hero Sam. Like Tentacle before it, you can move the central character around, pick up objects, talk to other people and use the objects you've found to solve the puzzles. As for your little buddy Max, he just generally wanders around doing his own thing. You can't control him specifically but you can ask him questions and even "use" him to solve some of the puzzles.

IT'S A BIT LIKE...

The obvious comparison is Day Of The Tentacle, because of the huge central sprites, the artwork and the humour. If you liked DOTT then Sam and Max is a natural progression, though you might find the control system a bit strange. If you haven't played DOTT yet why not? If you've never heard of it and the name "Bernard" doesn't even raise a smile, check out the review on page 72.

Sam & Max...

...hit DOTT!



● (Top) Max! You're holding a bomb! And it's ticking!

● (Above) Here's one of the more obvious clues...

FREELANCE POLICE? WHERE?

It's a strange partnership but Sam wouldn't be the highly efficient crime-fighting machine that he is without his lil' rabbit buddy Max. They fight crime because - hey! - they care. And in a cruel and uncaring world a little care goes a hell of a long way. There are only two main things to remember: one, uphold the law and two, PARTY!!!

SAM

Sam is the brains of the outfit. He's sharp and likes his suits to match. Possessing a keen analytical mind (which he's promising to give back to its owner), Sam is one of the world's foremost detectives. So he says.

MAX

If Sam is the brains then Max is the muscle, useful for smashing windows, punching and general violence. No matter what the situation, you can always rely on Max for a well-timed wisecrack. Max likes riding in washing machines in his spare time.

One of the first things you'll notice is that LucasArts have overhauled their famous SCUMM icon interface. There's been some major tinkering here and the usual row of verbs (look, use, open, close, etc) that previously occupied the bottom quarter of the screen has now been replaced with a new no-verb, 'pop-up' icon system. This has allowed LucasArts to increase the playing area and draw bigger and more colourful backdrops, which is good.

What is not good, however, is the fact that the new interface is a lot more fiddly than the old one. The simple mouse cursor has been replaced with five main icons, namely a walking hand (move to), an eyeball (look at), an open palm (get object), a set of teeth (talk to) and another hand clutching a rattle (use). You can cycle through these icons by clicking on the mouse button.

The system works thus: if you want to search for objects you simply bring up the eyeball icon and move it around the room. If you come across something useful the eyeball will animate, flicking open if you can see something, staying resolutely shut if you can't. As for the inventory this has been reduced to a small cardboard box icon in the corner of the screen. To put an object in your inventory simply click on it with the get icon and then click on the inventory box. It's that simple.

The talking interface has also been overhauled. Instead of the usual list of questions and quips that appear in Tentacle and Monkey Island, LucasArts have replaced them with a set of four icons. If you want to ask a question click on the "?" to kick start the conversation. If the character you're talking to has anything to say, further icons will appear on the panel. For example if the guy at Snuckeys knows anything about Bruno, a bigfoot icon will appear which represents a conversation. Sam and Max place much less emphasis on the conversations

as puzzles, you don't have to navigate your way through them as you did in Tentacle.

Now these new SCUMM tweaks work fine in theory, but as I mentioned, the new pop-up icon interface is a touch on the fiddly side. Because you have to cycle through the icons you often find that you miss the one you want and are forced to cycle through them again. It's a minor point I know but it's occasionally very frustrating and annoying. Full marks to LucasArts for trying something different. Seven out of ten for the result.

But any complaints I have about the control system shouldn't hide the fact that Sam and Max is a great game. It's still weird like Tentacle but there's a more adult slant to the humour. This is not to say Sam and Max isn't for kids because children will love the cartoon-style look of the graphics and the Tom and Jerry mock-violence. The humour though is far more subtle, ranging from visual jokes (fist fights and an inspired Virtual Reality sequence) to subtle verbal humour, word play and the odd in-joke (when Sam tampers with a cleaning droid it plays a taped message of Princess Leia calling for help).

I really can't fault Sam and Max at all, and I'm not going to rattle on about it exhausting my thesaurus because I want you to discover all the good bits for yourself.

I hardly need to say that if you liked Day of the Tentacle, you'll have a huge amount of fun with Sam and Max. It's a superbly presented game and even the documentation gives tremendous attention to detail and a complete disregard for anything remotely sensible. The manual (or should I say "Crimestomper Colouring Book") contains instructions on "How to build a lovable paper bag Max-head puppet" and includes the "thrill packed and completely unrelated official Sam and Max boardgame" and the "Sam and Max travelogue", an in-depth look at the perils of the unassuming roadside diner.

Sam and Max also features a built-in screen-saver and, as Sam is a 'Sam Spade' gumshoe type guy, there's even a 'film noir' mode; if you hit the 'B' key the whole screen goes black

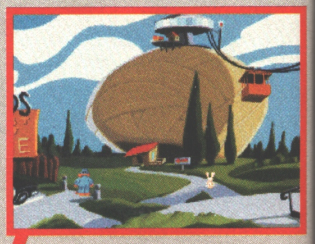
YOU'LL GET YOUR KICKS ON ROUTE 66...

During the course of their investigations, Sam and Max end up travelling the length and breadth of the United States. Their curiosity knows no bounds, their wallets know no credit limit and as they're Freelance police they can't even claim it back on expenses. If you want to see the seedy underbelly of 90's America, then come with us now...

Life at the Mystery Vortex, one of America's premier attractions, is far from simple. Chairs float, strange lights appear in the sky and whole rooms just turn upside down.

Frog Rock is so called because it bears no resemblance to a frog whatsoever, living or dead. Yet it has always been a focus for weird goings on....

Mount Rushmore no longer pulls in the crowds. The whole site has been transformed into a dinosaur park and bungee jump centre.



One of America's most neglected tourist spots is the World's Largest Ball of Twine. It's large and a ball of twine and that's about it.

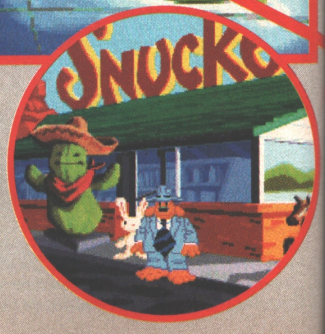
There's no room at the Savage Jungle because the whole place is playing host to a Bigfoot convention.

(Above) Hiway Surfin' is one of the many sub-games in Sam and Max. If you're bored or stuck you can while away the time jumping Max over the approaching road signs.

(Right) The celebrity Vegetable Museum where they can model your favourite star out of a tomato.

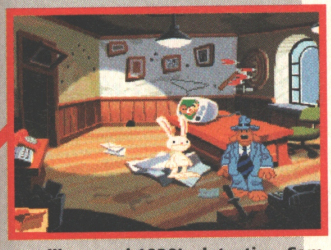
(Right Middle) The World of Fish, a small business run by someone who looks uncannily like Woody Allen.

(Far right) Your local Snuckeys store is invaluable for cheap snacks and tacky board games.



● (Above) This is one of Sam & Max's more amusing incidents. Sam comes across a VR headset and, never one to refuse temptation, he puts it on. He is then catapulted into a polygon-drawn world of mystery and fantasy. This isn't just a little set-piece - there is a point to it. Unlike real VR. If you know what I mean.

The investigation begins at the Kushman Brothers Carnival, home of the notorious Cone of Tragedy...



Just like a real 1930's detective, Sam and Max's office is an absolute tip. It's a good job they're always on the road really.

Bumpusville is named after its egomaniac owner Conroy Bumpus, a man who has an bad Bigfoot fetish.

Down at Gator Golf, Sam is trying to think of a way to free his little buddy Max from the Dunk the Beast cage. Nice golf swing!

IN-GAME STRESS RELIEVERS

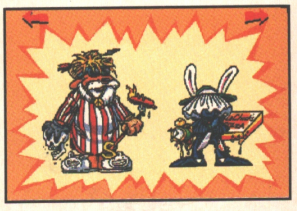
If you're stuck on a puzzle, don't tear your hair out. Why not amuse yourself a while with the Sam and Max decorative assortment of mini-games?

WAKARAT

There are five tiny sub-games to play including Gator Golf, the delightful Car Bomb game (AKA Battleships), Max's Wax Paint By Numbers book and Highway Surfin' where Max stands on the roof of the car and attempts to jump the oncoming roadsigns. Of course if you fancy something a little more violent there's always the Wak-A-Rat game.

DRESS UP

For the less active, Sam and Max present their Dress-Up Book, where the lovable but naked (barring a pair of undies) Sam and Max wait for you to pick clothes from their wardrobe and dress them. Hours of humourous japery await you here, especially if you think a rabbit with a tutu on its head is like really, *really* funny.



and white. Completely useless but another option nonetheless.

So does it beat Tentacle? Well, er, I still don't know. One of the only criticisms levelled at DOTT was that it was too easy and far too short. Thankfully this isn't true of Sam and Max which reminds me more of Monkey Island than the adventures of Bernard, Laverne and Hoagie. For starters it's a lot harder and should take you much longer to complete. The humour is more offbeat as well, slightly to the left of wacky but straight down the road to completely bizarre.

It didn't draw as much of a crowd as Tentacle did (always a good indicator of a quality game - see the Rebel Assault review), but then maybe that's because the Sam and Max intro sequence wasn't as mind-bogglingly stunning. It's a game I think you'll either find absolutely brilliant or slightly dull. One man's Pavarotti is anothers Take That, etc. In fact it may not work for you at all, but there's no denying the fact that it's miles better than anything else around (bar Tentacle of course). Look out for the full 'talky' CD version next year because if there's one game that will benefit from complete digitised speech it's Sam and Max. Personally I can't wait to hear Conroy Bumpus sing...

"Do you mind if I drive?" asks Max innocently.

"Not if you don't mind me clawing at the dash and shrieking like a cheerleader!" quips Sam and off they drive into the sunset...

● Apparently this is a Bigfoot Convention - these sorts of things happen all the time in the States, so they tell us.

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THE GOOD...

- A stunningly drawn graphic adventure in the Tentacle tradition.
- Humurous, fun and just that little bit longer than DOTT.
- The puzzles are tough and present a long-term challenge.

...AND THE BAD

- The new interface doesn't really work guys.

OVERALL 91%

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Greetings, humans. Allow me to introduce myself - I am Imp, the Devil's officially sanctioned advocate. As you're reading this devilishly good magazine you're no doubt a keen PC gamesplayer, so do you mind if ask you a quick question: "Why?" Okay, so you can get some good games on the PC but the damn machines are about as user-friendly as a Chinese version of the Thompson Local Directory and as simple to use as, well, DOS. As far as I'm concerned...

"PCs ARE CRAP!"

I'm going to put forward a motion that at first you won't agree with. You'll turn to me, filled with scorn and disgust, and say "You're wrong. You are totally and utterly wrong. How dare you sir?". I dare because I am right and although you won't want to admit it, you know it to be true. I put it to you that PCs, the very machines that are forming the life-blood of our gaming industry, are crap.

But how can this be so? Haven't I seen X-Wing? Does the name Day Of The Tentacle mean nothing to me? Strike Commander? Privateer? Elite II? TFX? Alone In The Dark? Are they all but words on a page? No, of course they're not. They're damn fine games. But tell me, how many of them did you manage to get up and running the moment you put the first disk in your machine for the first time? One maybe, possibly two? I'll bet Strike Commander wasn't loaded and on your screens within five minutes of the cellophane wrapping hitting the bin. Privateer took more than a quick cup of tea and a macaroon, didn't it?

"The trouble [with PCs] is that what has since happened in technological ability terms probably far outstrips the original designers' imagination."

ARCHER MACLEAN,
independent programmer

How long does it take to load Street Fighter II on your kid brother's Super NES? Do Megadrive owners have to mess around with system configurations when loading Sonic The Hedgehog 2? No, they simply pick up their pads of joy and start playing. So why should the game-playing process be any different for us?

Ah yes - Strike Commander. Great fun to play, not so much fun to get up and running.

BRITAIN VS AMERICA

There is quite obviously a staggering division in the user-friendliness of games from 'over there' compared to games from 'over here'. Just look at the difference between Privateer and Elite II. Both are games that deal with similar themes but Privateer comes on six disks, takes up 20Mb of hard disk space, requires 4Mb of RAM and has an installation manual that covers eleven pages. Elite II comes on one disk and can run straight from the floppy. Its PC installation text takes up all of eleven lines. Yet when you think about it, for all of Privateer's graphical wizardry, Elite II is a far bigger game. So why are American games so complicated to run?

"It would be tempting to say those American games aren't tested very well," says Bullfrog supremo Peter Molyneux. "Also they tend to use almost every lit-

tle bit of memory they can find. I think British games are just tested much more thoroughly."

It probably also helps that European developers don't tend to use so many people on one game. One team, Revolution Software (creators of Lure Of The Temptress and Beneath A Steel Sky), manages to fit everyone involved into just one room. Origin, on the other hand, has separate building for its graphics, sound and general programming teams.

The other problem seems to be the actual mechanics of European versus American game programming. Revolution's Charles Cecil: "I don't quite understand why there are so many problems with American games. We use a DOS extender and we've got no problems at all with Steel Sky. You don't need to have bootable disks and there's no way any of our competitors have more memory than we have. They're not doing any more with the machine than we are.

"There's no real justification for all the problems in this day and age. You do need a certain amount of base memory but you shouldn't need to mess around with EMM and so on. I don't understand why people can justify putting up software that is so problematical. Admittedly we're putting quite a lot of effort into making our games easy to use but with the software we write, we follow fairly standard programming techniques."

According to Archer Maclean, creator of Pool and Snooker, it's also a fault of the marketing companies. "It's because the American designers are usually quite ambitious but the actual games publishers still want full compatibility right down to CGA graphics and Tandy 16 colour machines. The Europeans tend to be more realistic in this respect and develop quality games for high-end, all-singing all-dancing PCs."

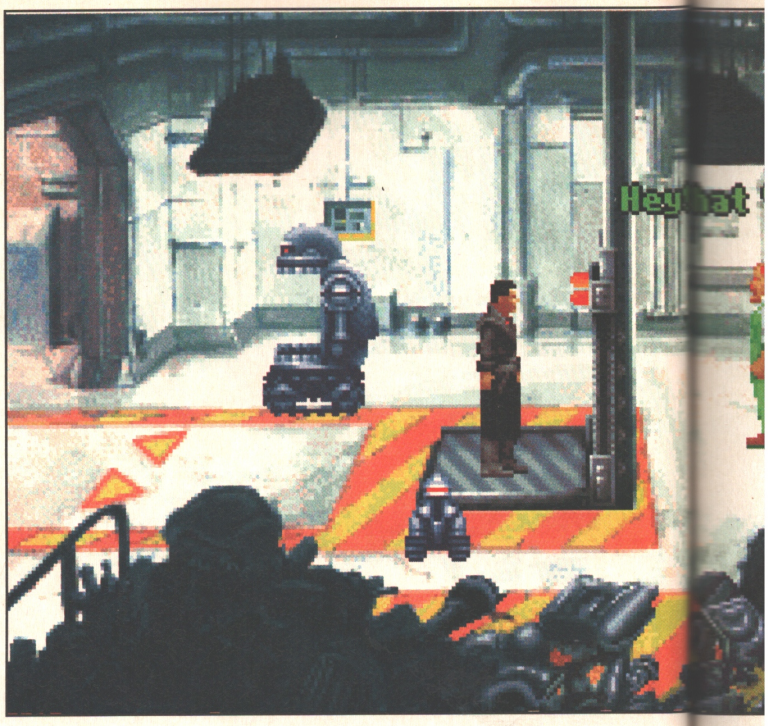
So let's take stock. So far it's the fault of unthorough testing, inadequate programming techniques and pushy publishers. Any other culprits? "What happened in the very early days of the PC," offers Peter Molyneux, "was that IBM wanted to contract a company to write a Disk Operating System. Unfortunately they phoned up the wrong company and got Microsoft. Once you've sold over a million copies of a DOS it's hard to change it to something else." Okay, let's add previous bad mistakes to the list. But what can be done about it?

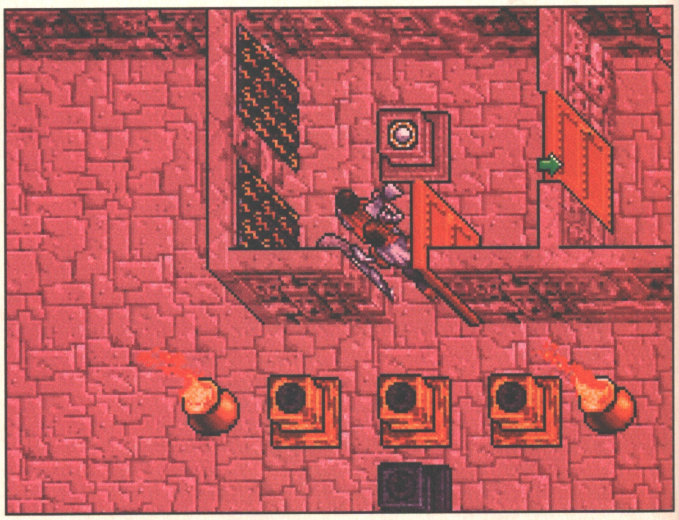
"There's no real justification for all the problems in this day and age. I don't understand why people can justify putting up software that is so problematical."

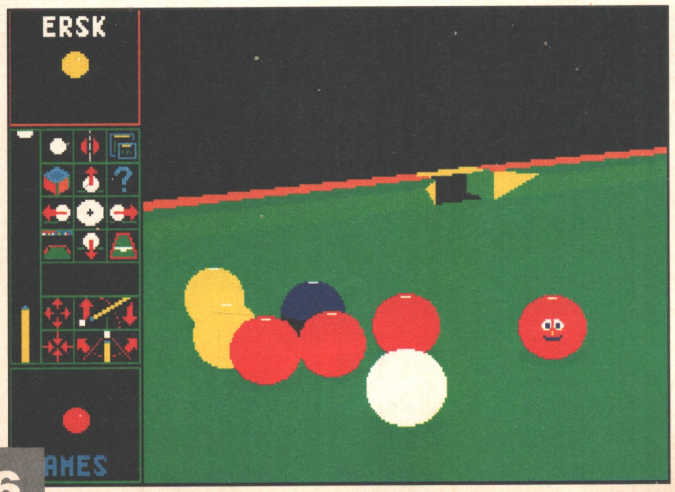
CHARLES CECIL,
Revolution Software.

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

Initially PC's just weren't games machines. Businesses used them for accounting and administration and the hundred and one other things businesses do to create red tape.







Archer Maclean's Snooker doesn't give you half the hassles that that awful *American* software does.

(Above) Ultima VIII - as much fun to install as eating hamster vomit.

Understandably then, getting those early editions of Pong and Space Invaders was a tricky affair. Then things changed. EGA was born, 286s appeared and 640K memory was introduced. "Hurrah!" went the multitudes, "Now we can play Pac-Man with a truly yellow character."

"Nooo!," screamed the bosses as they saw their employees waste valuable equipment in trivial ways.

Now things have gotten out of hand. Archer Maclean explains: "The original design contemplated the future and so a versatile building block system with certain internal hardware standards was put together. The trouble is that what has since happened in technological ability terms probably far outstrips the original designers imagination.

"Nowadays the 486/586's are so damn powerful that the requirement to be compatible with the original stone-age PC designs means that either the power is under utilised or the market place has to provided a thousand and one hardware accelerator add-ons that retain some sort of compatibility. These don't necessarily work with all the other wonderful

(Above) Beneath A Steel Sky proves that big games don't have to be a big headache.

IMP'S IDEAL PC

After a hard day's peace-treaty ruining (a favourite pastime of mine), I like to come home and relax with a few state-of-the-art games. Ideally my computing excursion would go something like this:

Turn on the PC. After a short but sweet boot-up screen (containing several melodious guitar chords and a quick animated feature, depicting the various safety checks the machine goes through - all in S-VGA of course) I am presented with a tableau de content - a list of all the games, utilities and other programs on my hard drive. Access to each program is obtained by simply speaking, yes speaking, its name into a microphone secured to the side of the monitor.

With the choice selected the startup program scans the appropriate directory for a configuration file, written by the game's programmers. The PC then sets up the memory accordingly and starts the game. This is, of course, all done in the merest of split seconds. As far as I am concerned I have said "X-Wing" and X-Wing has loaded.

But now I have bored of Mr Lucas's space malarkey and wish to install the copy of Ultima VIII sitting by my desk. A piece of cake. No, a piece of the finest chocolate gateaux that Mr Kipling and his associates have to offer. Apart from a list of games, the initial menu has an Install New Program option. I say "Install" and I am treated to a Universal Installation Starter. It asks me to place Disk 1 into the drive, it scans the disk for an INSTALL.EXE file and initiates it, adding the game to the directory list.

It may sound idyllic but the truth is, and prepare yourself as it might come as a bit of a shock, it's all possible now. Yes, even the speech recognition. It isn't available now, as the PC industry is nothing more than a headless beast, lumbering towards an unseen future. Until someone in a position of power decides to lay down some rules on standardisation it doesn't have a chance of happening. It won't though. It isn't good for competitive business and that, if you wish to become completely cynical about the proceedings, is the real driving force behind today's industry.

range of hardware speed-up tricks now available though so problems arise."

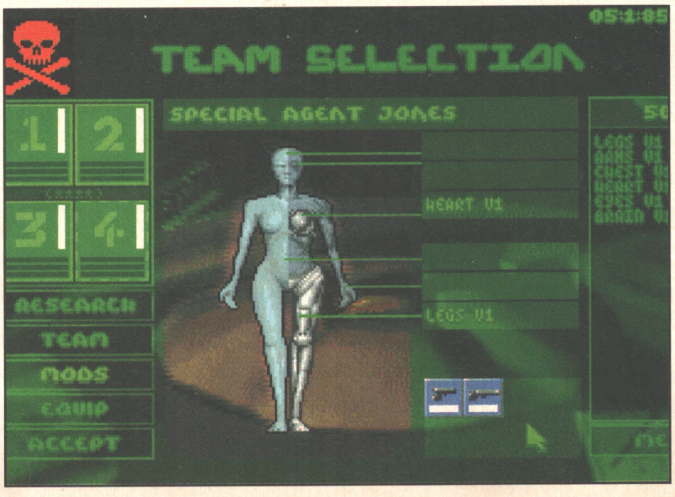
How do we change things then? What has to happen to the PC in order to see it running more like, let's say, an Apple? "My suggestion," offers Archer, "would be to totally scrap the standards imposed by the ancient PC design layout and then come up with a super-powerful, open access, no restrictions design (a la most 68000 systems). And to make it so flipping powerful that software alone could emulate the old PC structure if really needed."

"You've got to have a balance," says Charles Cecil. "You can either make it so that it's easier at the consumers' end and everything is very standard and you have to conform to rigid guide-lines, or at the developers' end where it's much more flexible in the way you can program it, but then you create problems at the user's end. I think somebody will come up with a system between the two, at the moment it is only Apple."

Good news then, if you believe that Apple is the operating system of the future. Even as you read, representatives from IBM and Apple are deep in negotiation, creating the next generation of home computers - the Power PC. We'll just have to wait and see what this potential marvel offers, but until then it seems PCs are going to remain as complicated as they are now. Format those floppies - boot disks, for the time being, are here to stay.

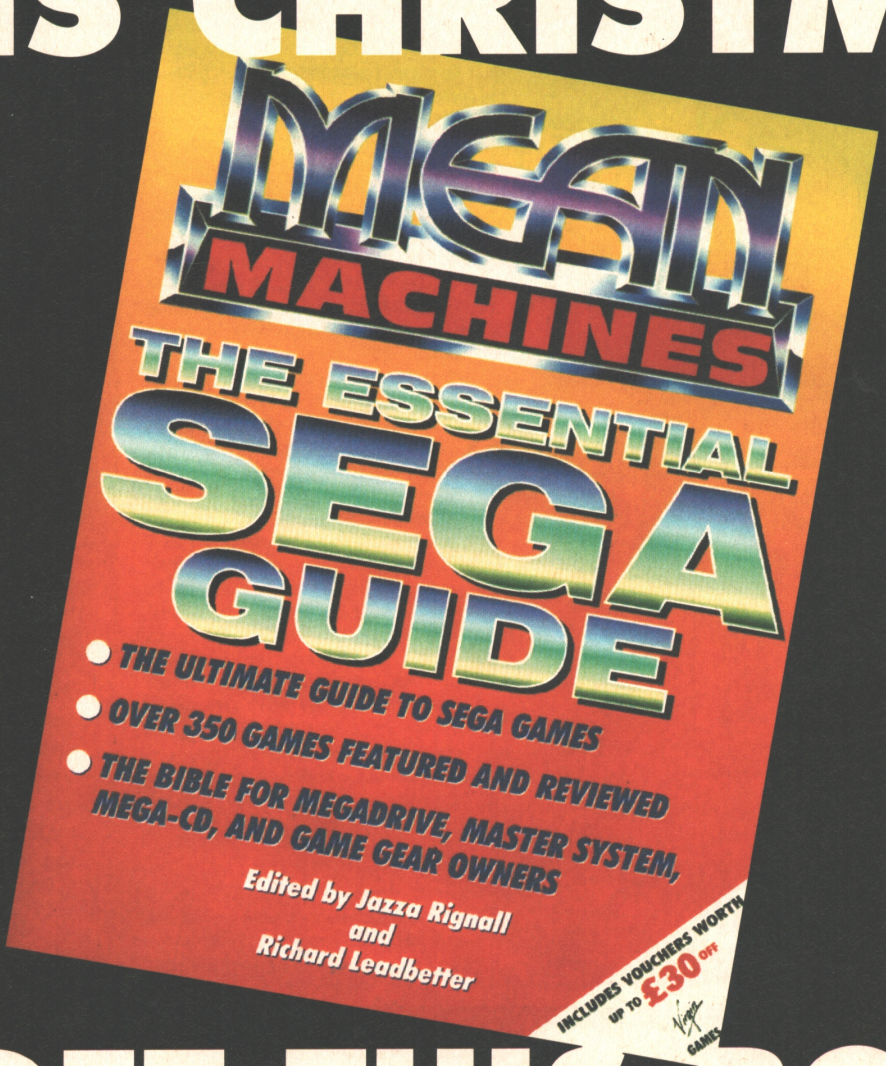
"Once you've sold over a million copies of a DOS it's hard to change it to something else."

PETER MOLYNEUX,
Bullfrog Productions.



Bullfrog's Syndicate won't get you into a killing mood when you install it, although it will when you play it.

JUST SAY "NO" TO SLIPPERS THIS CHRISTMAS



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Packed with everything you'll ever need to know about anything Sega, The Mean Machines Sega Guide is available from all good bookshops.

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POWER UP TIPS

Yo! R U ready to Power Up? (Says he, trying to sound all 'street' and trendy and under twenty-years-old and failing miserably.) This is the part of the mag where we offer you poor souls aid and succour on some of those games that have been keeping you awake with worry every night for the last month or so. Here you'll find much-needed playing guides, solutions and cheats to top games like Frontier, TFX, Simon the Sorceror, Jurassic Park and Innocent Until Caught, to name but a few. Actually, talking of Frontier...

FRONTIER

Yes, look, I know we've only just reviewed it but even we're stuck already. And we thought that if we're stuck then probably so are you. So here are some top tips from that hero of the Frontier Matt Broughton to get you started...

USING THE GALACTIC MAP FOR FUN AND PROFIT

A lot of people have discovered that the galaxy map is not the easiest thing in the universe to use. And as it's the only way you're ever going to be able to get from A to B let alone C, it seems some handy hints are in order:

(1) Don't rotate the map as it'll soon get very confusing, and you won't be able to judge distances between systems. Instead, roam around using the cursor keys and zoom in and out to look around, thus keeping the map on a flat plain. This way you can refer to your map poster for specific system locations first and then pinpoint the exact system that you're after. You may also find it useful to turn off the grid, the distance lines and the identification text at this point.

(2) Okay. Now that you've found the system you want, bring up the trading route display to get a clearer idea of exactly how far away systems are and what the best route to take is. Then work your way along the trail from the start point to the destination to get an idea of how far away you are. If you want to get to your destination faster, unload all your missiles, cargo, etc, and invest in enough fuel to allow you to jump on as soon as you get to the next system.

THE SYSTEM MAP SYSTEM

It's a common story. You've entered a system, found a world you want to land on, turned on the autopilot, stuck the time-skip to max and - boom! - you've crashed into the planet rather than end up in its starport. Don't cry. Let us help you.

(1) When you target a location, be sure that you're very specific. Just targeting a planet is not good enough and will only get you to the specific area (it's at this point that the autopilot will shut down, leaving you to fly straight into the planet itself).

(2) By double clicking on the zoom icon, you will go straight to the closest view and should select a specific port (i.e. Sirocco Station, etc).

(3) You must have the location's name up when you select an autopilot target. If you click on the location's 'dot' while the name is not shown then for some reason the autopilot gets all confused and just sends you tens of AUs out in any old direction, even though you are correct.

(4) If you are having trouble getting the location names to appear, just click onto one that you can see and the other location names should appear. Failing this, experiment with zooming in and out and rotating the system with the mouse or the time controls.

THE FINE ART OF TRADING

It's as important in Frontier as it was in Elite to find two good trading posts to bounce between as you initially generate some capital for yourself. Here are a few suggestions for the beginner. With all of these, it's worth using the data on a system's economy (the F7 key on the galactic map) to see if there are any opposite economies along the way (i.e. you're leaving somewhere with a major export in computers and travelling somewhere where these are a major or minor import).

Suggestion 1

After starting at Ross 154 move across to Barnard's star and on to Sol. From Sol you can sell any missiles you have (keeping as much storage free for cargo as possible) and invest in liquor and 1 ton of hydrogen fuel. Now make you way across to Lalande 25372 where you can sell it for a fair profit.

Remembering to buy some more fuel, stock up on computers and make your way back to Sol. You will notice that your internal fuel tank is low, but if you head for Mars High (the space station above Mars) you should make it fairly easily.

You can trade like this for as long as you fancy and should have fairly quiet journeys in both directions. One particularly good feature of this suggestion is that quite often, if you check the bulletin board before selling your cargo at Mars High, you will find a bloke who'll offer above average prices for computers, so don't forget to look before you sell.

Suggestion 2

From the Ross 154 bulletin board you can accept two packages that require passage to Fomalhaut - the first Federation military mission and the last bulletin mission. You should then buy 2 tons of hydrogen fuel and travel first to Lacaille 8760 and then jump straight on to Fomalhaut. You can then travel travel out to Luyten 789-6 carrying liquor, and make the return journey with robots, repeating this for as long as you want.

The only problem with this route is that the journey out to Luyten 789-6 is a very hostile one and you can find yourself in anything up to ten dogfights in one journey. (I actually got from harmless to mostly harmless to poor in one delivery!) This really is only a good starting strategy if you fancy tons of battles along the way.

THE FINER ART OF COMBAT

Oh yes. The big problem. Just about everyone I've spoken to has had a fair amount of trouble getting to grips with the combat, so here is a step-by-step account of techniques that I personally employ for success.

(1) As soon as you are given an attack warning, disengage auto-pilot (if you have one on) and turn the identifier on (the F10 key). Now locate the enemy with the scanner and try to get it on screen - the identifier should make it easier to pick out against the starry backdrop. Have your finger over the pause button and freeze the screen as soon as you see your opponent.

(2) Thankfully you can still operate a good proportion of your features while frozen, so now's the time to get yourself sorted out. The first thing to do is to target him with your mouse to find out how far away he is, then turning the identifier off again. If he's close, it's worth switching to the outside view and having a quick shuffle around to see exactly where he is in relation to yourself.

(3) If he's in a fairly standard craft and you feel confident that he's travelling pretty much straight towards you, you can arm a missile (if you have any) and even fire it - you're still paused but the missile will ferret off towards him as soon as things start up again. If you don't have any missiles, just return to the main screen and turn your engines off and get ready with the manual thrusters (the Return and Shift keys).

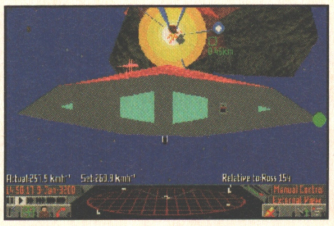
(4) The skill in this sort of dogfighting is reacting efficiently to the given distance of the enemy craft. If he's coming towards you, throw your ship into reverse, thus giving you a longer amount of time with the enemy in your sights. If he is going out of range, chase him until his distance moves in again.

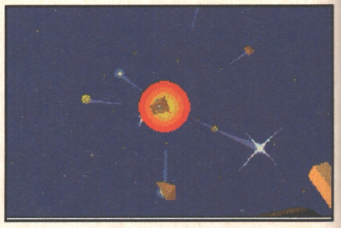
(5) The real aim here is to get into a series of 'chicken races' against him, bombing towards each other and avoiding time consuming battles where you just watch him streak across the sky while you wobble along behind him trying to get the odd shot in. If he seems to be going for this approach, try to judge where he is heading for, and speed there before him. Now when you face him, you will be on a much tighter angle which can be corrected until you are pretty much on a collision course.

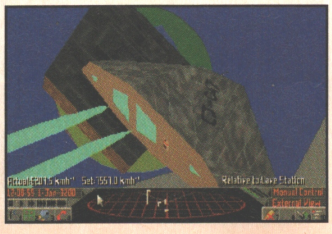
(6) Most baddies will start to fire once they're within four kilometres and are most dangerous to you at about two kilometres (especially if they have beam lasers). You need to know when to pull out of the 'chicken' and pass above or under the enemy with your engines full forward as he streaks past. The moment you are past him you should cut your engines, roll to face the back end of the passing ship, and then kick in your engines.

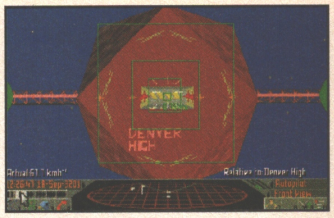
This is when the enemy craft is at its most vulnerable as it's still close but turning to attack again. That last sentence is a bit of a lie, in fact, as the best move you can do is to pull out of the chicken as late as possible but roll with him still in your sights, presenting you with the flat top or bottom of the ship which is easier to target.

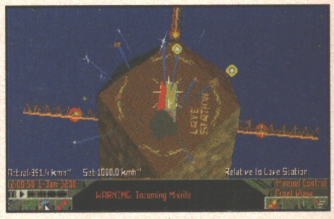
(7) Another good technique when

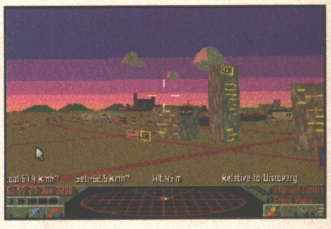












you're this close up is to enter the 'chicken' and pause the game when he gets under two kilometres away from you. You can now switch to the external view and launch missiles. Because most ships will peg it away at full pelt the moment they get one whiff of a missile, it's better to do this when he's on his way in rather than out for obvious reasons.

LOOK OUT! MISSILES!

If your have missiles launched against you, there are two things you can do: one is very safe, the other is more aggressive but potentially dangerous.

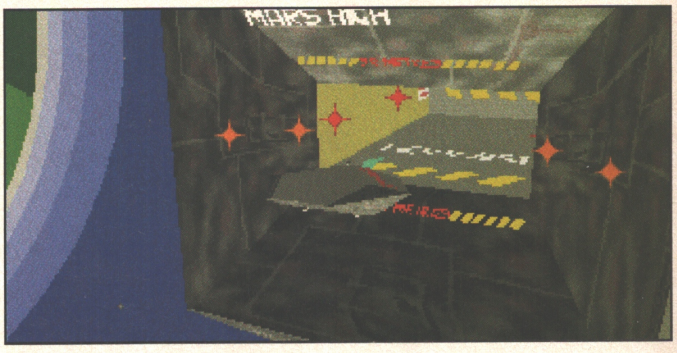
The Safe Method

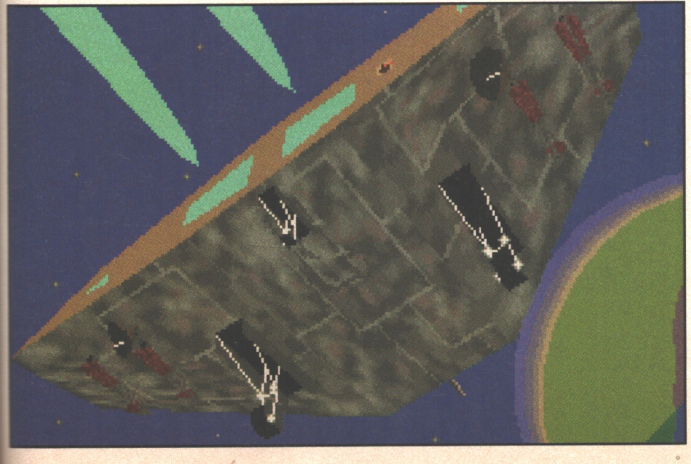
As soon as you get the missile warning, pause the game and turn the identifier on. Now switch to the external view, find the missile and make it your new target. Now flick to the rear view, turn the ship to manual control and restart the game. Remembering that you're looking out the back, move the ship so that you can see the missile and get some serious speed up.

Because you've targeted the missile, you will be able to see exactly how close it is and, if it you keep it in the middle of your rear view, you'll be able to outrun it until it expires. The only problem with running away (apart from being girly) is that any damage you've done to enemy shields has time to repair itself.

The Unsafe Method

Once the missile warning has been given (and isn't it just the most annoying noise?) then, as long as the enemy isn't directly in front of you, turn on the auto-pilot which will move you round to the enemy. This will keep you moving and should keep you out of trouble for long enough while allowing you to maintain your attack. The only problem here is that unless you have a powerful beam laser, you normally won't have long enough to destroy the ship (the auto-pilot is accurate but slow to lock in). The only way to overcome this is to let the auto-pilot bring you in-line and then switch over to manual just before you need to pull out of the 'chicken'.





SOME OTHER THINGS TO DO

(1) Keep saving the game, even after destroying each enemy on the way to a destination. This is essential if you want to make fast progress without having to go through the same battles time and time again - and you might want to reload a game if you loose a particularly expensive piece of equipment or suffer severe hull damage.

(2) This is a bit of a cheat (so what?) but if you save the game before you leave your current location then when you arrive at your next port of call you can check the bulletin board for traders looking for specific stock (such as computers on Mars High). You can then load your previously saved game and make sure that you invest in tons of whatever it was that they were looking for.

It's also worth taking the time to fly to a system where that stock is a major export as you can buy it dead cheap and make more of a killing when you go back to where you saw the advert - the computer will still think that this is the first time you've been there, so the advert will still appear!

(3) Take your time when landing and taking off from planets - even when on auto-pilot. I know that it's a drag to watch and I know that it shouldn't make any difference, but it seems to sometimes result in 'death for no apparent reason' (a small chocolatey sponge cake). This is more frequent on planet bases than space stations so watch out.

(4) If you run out of internal fuel on the way to a location and have no more left to refuel with, keep the auto-pilot on and push time forward. If you have enough speed and are close enough, you can sometimes still make it to the location and the auto-pilot with take you in.

(5) Later in the game, when you get hold of a more powerful beam laser, you can target enemy craft in battles, put some distance between you and then turn on the auto-pilot. Even though the auto takes a fair while to pull round to the target once you do home in you can do a hell of a lot of damage in a fairly short amount of time. Just watch out for enemies doing it back to you!

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F117A

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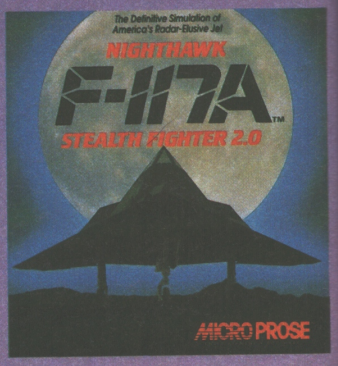

The same superior game play and design but with much more: true to life new graphics, sound that seems to wrap around you, more worlds to conquer and more scenarios to challenge you.

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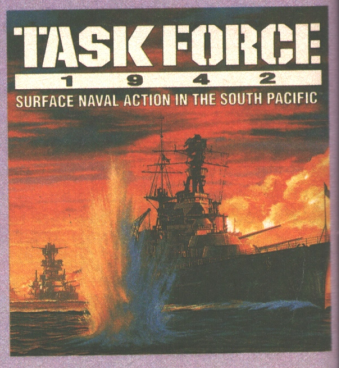
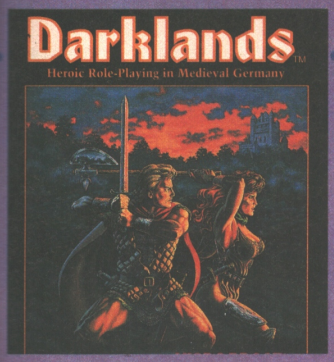


accurate, this three dimensional game sets new standards in the simulation of warfare at sea.

DARKLANDS

Darklands is the first realistic fantasy role-playing game.



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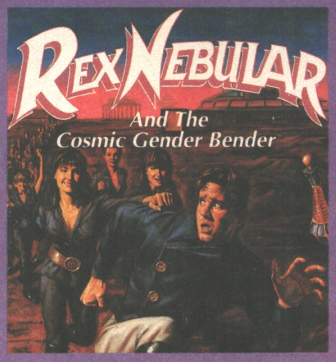

does not exist.... Rex seeks a price-less goal, but will he survive the journey? And how will he handle the natives? Can you lend Rex a hand to cope with the numerous demands made on him?

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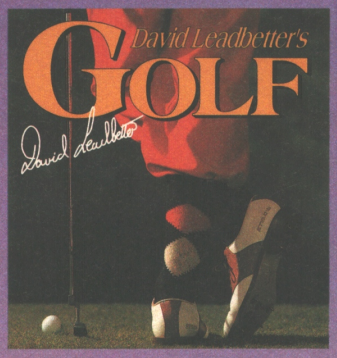

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SIMON THE

After Simon stumbles into an inter-dimensional portal (as you do), he finds himself trapped in a fantastic world. Dean Evans leaps in after him and conjures up the complete and definitive solution.

LET US BEGIN...

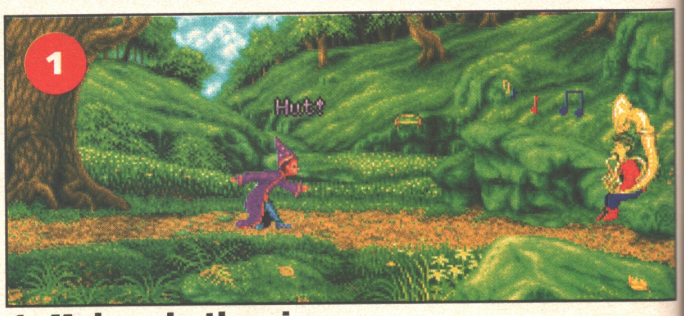
Now, the best thing to do in the early stages of Simon the Sorcerer is have a good wander around. Taking time out to be nosy means that not only will you discover most of the locations but you will also get a good idea of what tasks must be completed and what objects you should be looking for.

Simon's quest begins in the small, quiet village of Fleur Deli and by the time you've had a poke around you should have found the following objects: a magnet and a pair of scissors (wizard's cottage); a rope and a bell clapper (blacksmith's forge); a ladder, a specimen jar and a cold remedy (druid's house). Get the matches in the tavern and, while you're there, use the hairdressing scissors to snip off the dwarf's beard.

There's nothing like a good wander, that's what I say, and once you've made it into the forest there's a whole host of things waiting to be discovered. Get the feather from the owl and the whistle from the crying barbarian (which you use to get over the troll bridge). Get the bucket of water from the well at the evil witch's cottage, the metal detector from the depressed woodcutter, the shopping list from under a stone at the Goblin village and don't forget to chat to the grumpy paleantologist working down his hole.

Talk to the oaf, pour water on his beans and pick them up from the puddle. When you reach Repulser's Tower use the bell clapper with the bell and move it. When the hair falls, climb up and talk to Repulser who'll eventually turn into a pig. Lastly, when you dine chez Swampling, ask for a second bowl of stew and use the stew with the specimen jar. Keep eating until the Swampling leaves. Oh, don't forget to talk to the woodworm.

Okay, now we've got you this far let's get right down to it and start doing some real adventuring...



1. Melons in the air

In the village go behind the wizard's house to the compost heap. Use the magic beans with the compost to get a watermelon. Use the melon with the sousaphone (above) and then go to the giant and use the Sousaphone.

2. Pigs love choccy

At the cottage use Repulser the pig with the chocolate door. When she chews a hole in it, go inside and pick up the beekeeper's hat and the smokebox. Use the smokebox on the beehive and get the beeswax.

3. Mine's a pint

Once you have the wax, chat to the landlord and order any drink you fancy. As he ducks behind the bar, use the wax with the left-hand beer barrel to block up the tap. The barman will take the barrel outside. He'll also give you a beer voucher.

4. The mine

Get the small rock outside and read the password on it. Wear the beard and enter the cave. Try to walk past the guard on the left-hand side. When he bars your way, offer him the beer as a bribe. He'll make you carry it down into the Ale Room.

5. Short changed

In the Ale Room, use the feather on the sleeping dwarf and get the key. Go up the stairs and down the steps on the left. Pick up the hook and use the key on the door. Go in, and offer the dwarf the beer voucher. He will give you a gem.

6. Ye olde shoppe

Talk to the dodgy geezer in the village square. Offer him the gem and get 20 gold pieces for it. With your new found wealth pop into the shop. Give in the shopping list and buy the hammer (free nail included) and the bottle of white spirit (circled below).

7. The dragon's cave

Wander into the cave and use the cold remedy on the dragon. When the dragon is dozing peacefully, nip inside again and grab the handily placed fire extinguisher. Outside, use the hook on the boulder and climb up. Use the magnet with the rope and dangle it down the hole to get even more money. You need at least 30 gold pieces to be inducted as a wizard later in the game.

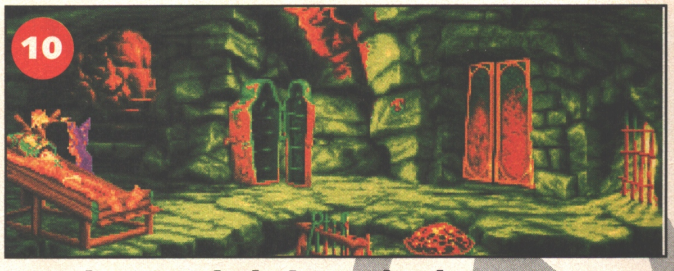
SORCERER

8. The Tolkien fan club

The shopkeeper won't make up the shopping until you have enough items to complete the Goblin village. Go to the crossroads and north to the gorge. Click on the vines to go down. Give Gollum the Swampling stew and he'll give you the fishing rod. You will then fish for the magic ring.

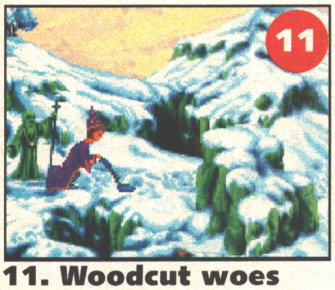
9. The Goblin village

Return to the village shop, open the box of shopping and you'll be taken inside Goblin Central. In the storeroom search the boxes to find your spellbook. Open the spellbook to find a scrap of paper and pick up the rat bone. Use the paper under the door and use the rat bone with the lock. Now pick up the paper to get the key.



10. There's a hole in my bucket

Wearing the ring, nip past the goblin guard (picking up the bucket first) and go down to the druid. Remove the ring and talk to the druid until you discover his 'werefrog' tendencies. Pick up the mints and the firebrand. Use the bucket with the druid and then the firebrand with the druid. Hide in the Iron Maiden to escape the goblins.



11. Woodcut woes

In the icy wastes use the metal detector on the screen shown here. Take the rock with the fossil in it (the interesting looking rock also found on a snow-laden screen) to the blacksmith and use it on the anvil. Now give the fossil to the paleantologist who'll move his dig site to where you left your metal detector.

12. Rubber trees

Go to the new dig site in the snow, look at the dirt and pick up the milrith ore (what would we do without mithril ore, eh?). Use the ore on the blacksmith's anvil to get an axehead. Give the axehead to the woodcutter who'll leave to cut down trees. Nip inside his cottage, use the extinguisher on the fire, pick up the climbing pin from the table and move the hook in the fireplace. You'll descend down into a woodstore where you can pick up the woodworm's favourite choice of wood. Go to the stump and talk to the woodworm.

13. Nafflin in a spin

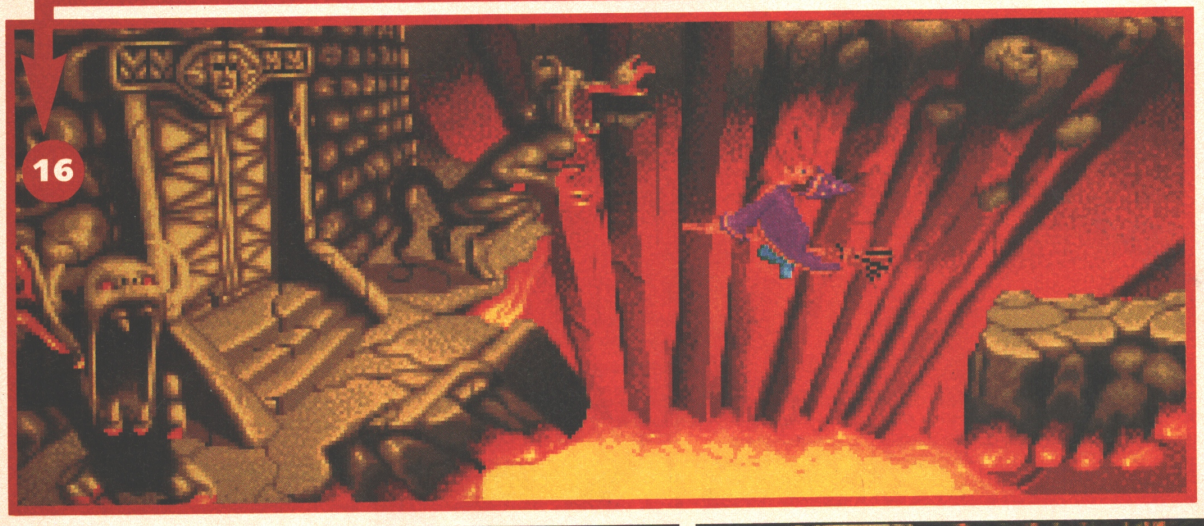
Go back to Repulser's Tower. Use the woodworm on the floorboards. Use the ladder to get down the second and open the tomb. When Nafflin appears, 'move' the loose bandage and get the staff. Go back to the wizards in the tavern and they'll induct you as a wizard for 30 gold pieces.

14. Froggy problems

Return to the druid's cottage. He wants some frogsbane in return for a potion. Go to the Swampling's house, move the crate and open the trap door. There's a loose plank down here so nail it down. Get the frogsbane from Skull Island and return to the druid. Voilá, one shrinking potion

15. Shifty sorcery

Go to the talking tree and use the white spirit to remove the pink splodge. Talk to the tree and get the magic words. Go to the ruined witch's cottage and pick up the broom. In the magical battle try and beat her as best you can. I tend to go for sausages all the time. When she loses and changes into a dragon, change into a mouse and escape into the mouse hole.



16. Extra strong mints

Now it's time to go to the tower. Use the climbing pin with the hole and go up. Consume the mints to melt the snowman. When you reach the tower the bridge will collapse. Use the broom to get over the gap and then consume the shrinking potion.

17. My secret garden

Pick up the leaf, the stone and the matchstick from the bucket. On the next screen, get the lily leaf and use the matchstick and leaf with it. Get on the leaf and get the seeds. Return to shore and use the seeds with the rock to make some oil. Use the oil on the tap and then the hair on the tap.

18. There isn't mush-room

On the other side, look at the water and pick up the tadpole. Talk to the frog and tell him that if he doesn't get out of the way, the tadpole gets it. When he leaves, pick up and consume the mushrooms. When you're back to normal size get the branch from the tree.

19. Inside the Tower

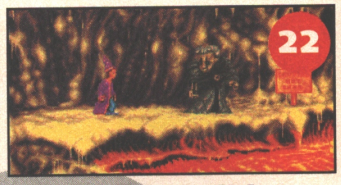
Use the branch to defeat the chest. Pick up the spear and the shield. Go down and use the spear to get the skull on the ceiling. Pick up the chest. Move the lever, put the chest on the block and move the lever once again to crush it. Move the lever once more time and pick up the candles. Go up and up again

20. Smelly socks

Get the pouch, sock, book and magic wand. Use the sock with the pouch and the pouch with the hole to get the mouse. Talk to the mirror and go up. Talk to the demons. Get the book and chemicals. Use the chemicals on the shield and hang the shield on the hook. Talk to the mirror again. Ask to see the lab. Read both books and go back upstairs. Talk to the demons.

21. It's the pits

At the fiery pits, pick up the pebble and the Y-shaped sapling. Talk to the souvenir seller who will give you some brochures. Look at the brochures and then use the elastic band with the sapling. Use the beautifully constructed catapult with the bell to distract the souvenir seller. Pick up the souvenir matches and move towards the pits.



22. Truly Sordid

Use the magic wand with Sordid and he'll turn to stone. Now relight the pits with the matches and chuck the wand into the re-lighted pits. Unfortunately, Sordid now returns to life and zaps you away. Simply wander back in and use the floor wax with Sordid to defeat him. Congratulations and jubilations - you've finished Simon the Sorcerer!

TORNADO

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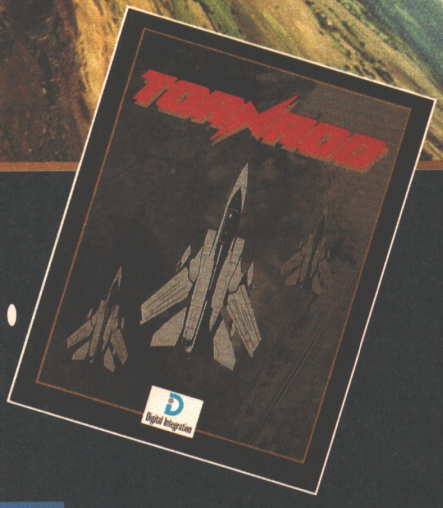

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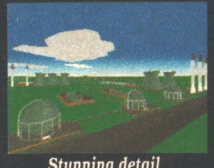
Pilot's cockpit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Visa Access

Troubled by the T-Rex? Stumped by the Stegosaurus? Baffled by the Brontosaurus? Yes? Then you're in luck, because here are guides to each and every level. So join us as, in a slightly dodgy Scottish accent, we say "Welcome... to Jurassic Park tips."

JURASSIC PARK

1. T-REX PADDOCK

You start near the wrecked car in the middle of the top of the map. The first thing you'll need to do here is make your way down to the south-west, where you will come across the motion sensor terminal. From here, open the bunker door. Yes, it's taking a gamble, but who really cares?

Now run for the bunker, which you'll find in the south-west corner of the paddock. Go into the bunker and collect the toolbox. Run back to the start and locate the pipe entrance. Now all you need to do is use the toolbox to open it and climb through.

2. DRAINAGE SYSTEM

Head into the sewer (thank God you can't smell the things around you!) and take the first left. Here, if you scrabble about a bit, you'll find the keycard - this'll grant you access to areas later on. Now go to the north-west part of the network, where you'll find the crate.

You can't pick it up, so you'll need to push it into the water and then find Lex in the north-east part of the maze. Push the crate over the Lex and she'll get on, being a sensible young thing, and you can now take her back to the starting point and climb back out into the Rex paddock.

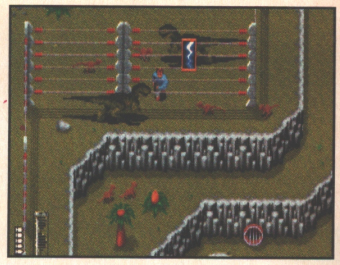
3. T-REX PADDOCK

For this part you need to hunt around a bit. Tim is hiding out here somewhere, but in a random location unfortunately. Once you've found him, head for the north-east corner of the paddock and you'll find a gate. With the keycard and Tim and Lex in tow, you can just walk through to the next section.

4. TRICERATOPS PADDOCK

When you enter this section, you'll see that the kids have vanished. Don't worry about them for now. Just head for the fence in the north-west, and you'll find a break in the railings. Along the way, collect as much fruit as you can. When you get to the paddock, enter and head north where you'll see the entrance to a long channel. Enter it and run south. Grant will automatically drop the fruit which will slow down the Triceratops. When you leave the channel, head east and drop into the enclosure you find.

To slow down the big triceratops, stand by a wall until it charges, and then step out of the way. When the wall collapses, run south and west to collect a keycard. Use it to enter the bunker in the north-east corner.



5. ACCESS TUNNEL

One of the 3D sections to the game. All you need to do is get to the other side.

6. STEGOSAURUS PADDOCK

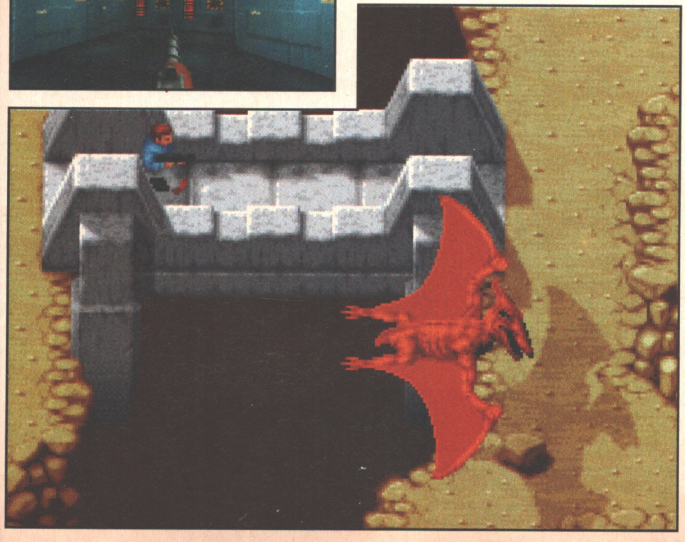
This one is quite an easy one, at least to describe. Head north, climbing over the boulders to get up and down the cliffs. If you look you'll find the kids on a bridge in the north-west area of the paddock. Collect them and head west past the bridge to find the exit.

7. GALLIMIMUS PADDOCK

If you head south-west, you'll come to a barrel perched on the edge of a cliff. Now what would you do in real life in this kind of situation? Push the barrel off the edge, obviously. Now go north to the bunker.

Here the kids will get scared by the stampede (just typical, isn't it? You take them for a day out and they still complain) and lock themselves in. You can now head west into the stampede, and come out by going south to an east/ west channel. Drop into the channel and run east collecting as many distress flares as you can. Use these to distract the T-Rex as you run towards the east.

Cross the small ditch by jumping onto the broken barrel next to it, and then throw a flare into the ditch. The barrel will catch fire, containing the T-Rex to the other side of the ditch. Now run to the north to collect a keycard, and then open the tunnel door with the card. Wait for the kids and exit the paddock by heading west.



8. DILOPHOSAUR PADDOCK

Leave the kids at the main gate and enter the paddock by going through the hole in the ground under the fence. Go north-east and find the motion sensor terminal. From this terminal, open the bunker door. Head south from the Pterodome and find the bunker. Here you'll collect a keycard, which you can then use to enter the Pterodome.

9. PTERODOME

In this level you'll need to search under all the Pterodactyl eggs. Under one of them you'll come across another one of those keycard things. With the card, leave by the west exit. There, that wasn't so hard was it?

10. BRACHIOSAUR PADDOCK

In the north-west corner of this paddock, you'll come to another motion sensor terminal. Use this to open the Pterodome door. Now you have to more of that searching malarkey to locate all the missing embryos and Nedry's keycard. With all collected you can go through the door in the fence and back into the Pterodome.

11. PTERODOME

Look around the west side of the dome until you find a boulder. Push it over the cliff and then use it to head north. Somewhere you'll find the switch that controls the extending bridge over the river. Shoot it to extend the bridge and then cross the river. Now just leave the Pterodome by the south-west exit, and it's back out into the Dilophosaur paddock.

12. DILOPHOSAUR PADDOCK

You'll start on a small winding jungle path. Follow this to the west until you find the raft floating in the river. Climb onto the raft, carefully, and then untie it. The current will carry the raft eastwards and, before you know it, you'll leave the paddock.

13. PTERODOME

Oh no, not back here again! Yes, I'm afraid so, But never mind, you're nearly home now. Just follow the current for a while, and when you reach the waterfall, jump onto the south bank (before the raft goes over, obviously!). Follow the path to the base of the waterfall, and jump back onto the raft. Now just follow the current back out to the east again.

14. BRACHIOSAUR PADDOCK

Jump off the boat onto the island in the lake. Here you will find another ever so handy terminal, which you can use to open the gate in the fence. Head for the gate and then exit to the south-west. Don't worry, you're nearly there!

15. DILOPHOSAUR PADDOCK

The final segment. Head to the west, looking for the motion sensor along the way. When you find it, use it to open the gate in the fence. Find the gate, which is a way off the to west, and now you can finally leave the park through the main gates to the north. Now you know where we are, don't be a stranger!

INNOCENT U

We all bit hate bills, but nobody hates them more than Jack T. Ladd - he's faced with a tax invoice containing more zeroes than a trainspotter's club. So, to help sort him out here's a rather spiffy guide to the early stages of the game.

MONEY FOR NOTHING?

The key to cracking Innocent Until Caught is collecting the right objects, combining them in the right way, and using them in the right time and place. It's a difficult to solve because - let's be frank - many of the puzzles strain logic to breaking point. For example, do you think it possible to engineer an airgun out of an aerosol can and a length of hose? Probably not. Would it even occur to you to try? Probably not. Which is why you need PC Games' essential players guide...

Remember that this is a guide to solving puzzles, not to playing the game. The two aren't quite the same: there's a lot more to do in IUC than you'll find listed here. It's just that much of what you can do (particularly in terms of chatting to others) isn't directly relevant to solving the game.

Note that all left/right directions are relative to you, facing the display.

This where you start. All you need is the passport from that bench. Exit the Spaceport to the pavement and turn left down the side of the building to a new location featuring a prostitute. Proceed left to the bar and enter.

This shot was actually taken later during the game, as you can see from the crowded inventory. When you first enter this location, however, you'll find several items here you need. One is the pawn ticket, which at the beginning of the game can be seen protruding from the pocket of the man seated on the left at the bar. On a table to the far left of the bar (not shown here) is a jar and lid. Put those in your inventory and then put the lid on the vase by picking up the lid and dropping it on the vase (not vice-versa). Keep the closed jar in your inventory.

HINT: This hot dog stand and the fly (just visible on the far left of the display) will help you solve a puzzle later in the game. Drop the closed jar on the stand and you'll fill it with mayonnaise. Then use the jar on the fly to trap it.

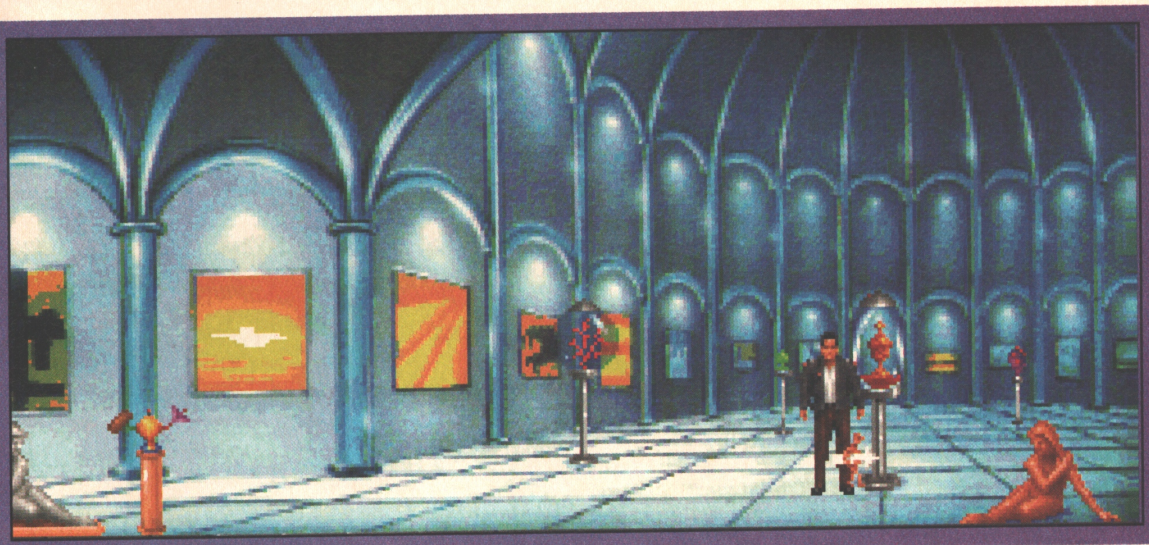
This is the Paradise Bar. Chat to the woman at the bottom of the stairs to receive your first mission: retrieving a vase from the Pawnbroker. While you're here, pick up a stick which is found on the floor near the receptionist's desk and a perfume bottle on the table. These objects aren't referred to again in this guide, but you'll need them to solve a puzzle later.

Once you've left the bar, proceed left to the Pawnbrokers (with the traditional three balls above the door) and enter. Give the pawn ticket to the Broker who, when you first arrive, will be in the window behind where he is standing in this shot. He'll give you a camera. At the beginning of the game, there is a vase over to the left. Click the USE icon on it and the pawnbroker will let you have the silver foil wrapping inside (but not the vase).

HINT: to th you t

This alley the hose left to th

UNTIL CAUGHT



HINT: Inside the Art Gallery. You're standing beside the work of art which you need to get for the mobster. Out of sight to the left is a small pellet on a plinth. Put this in your inventory. Then use the air gun on the statue. The first time, the pellet bounces off. Retrieve it (difficult: persevere with the PICK UP icon) and fire again, breaking the case. Then drop the carpet from the pawnbroker on the case. It will roll out on the floor. Retrieve the pellet again and fire at the statue, knocking it off the plinth and on to the carpet. Get the statue.

HINT: This is the Art Gallery (left) and Mobster's Mansion (right). Talk to the camera and show the ring to gain access. The mobster will give you three missions to accomplish.

The bikers can't help you yet. First, you must use the EYE icon to locate the power point on the end of the Diner shed. Use the camera on the powerpoint to charge it up. Pick up the oil can, found on the ground, foreground left.

This alley can be found between the Paradise Bar and the Pawnbrokers. Pick up the hose and the bag, found on the ground on the right. Then carry on to the left to the Biker location.

NOW....

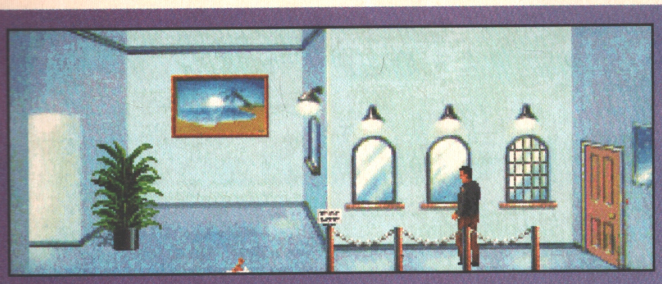
Use the camera on the tramp in the alley. This will dazzle him (for quite some time). Just in front of him is a barely discernible object which looks like it might be a black jar. Actually it's a hat. Get it. Using the hat puts some loose change in your inventory. Then...

Go back to the pawnbroker and pick up the vase. Drop it on the bag in your inventory and it will disappear inside. Leave the pawnbroker go to the Paradise where the owner will exchange the vase for an ornament. This ornament isn't very easy to see as it's right beside the girl sitting on the table, you may need to persevere with the PICK UP icon until you get it into your inventory.

Keep the empty bag in your inventory, return to the biker location and give the ornament to the biker located upper right. Admire his friend's coat and you'll get it, in the form of a heap of coins transferred to the bag in your inventory.

Return to the bar and sit down (click the USE icon on the seat to the far left). Buying a drink with the loose change found in the hat triggers a sequence at the end of which there is a ring on the floor. The barman will also give you a single coin of change.

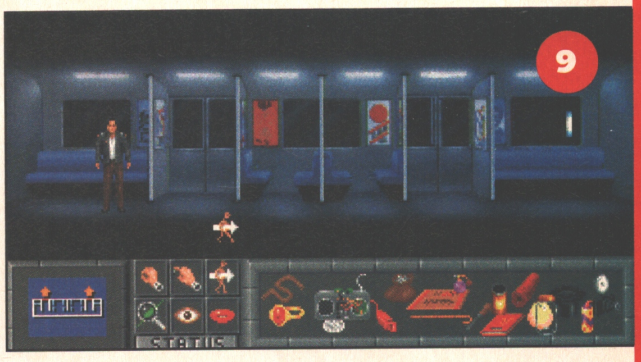
Pick up the wrapper from the vase and drop it on the coin, turning it into a token for the subway. Pick up the ring. You're now ready for the next exciting phase of the game...



HINT: Inside the bank. Talk to the window on the left and the receptionist will allow you to open an account (using the bag with coins in it). But you'll need the gum from the receptionist to stick on the door latch.

Go to the Badside tube entrance hall (just past the Pawnbroker's) and drop the token on the entry machine. This gives you access to the trains for the rest of the game. Trains call regularly and the line calls at stations in the following order: BADSIDE, SPACEPORT, HILL, REGURGI, EAST ERUK. See the table for the list of principal locations at each station.

The tube platforms are the same in each station, but when you first enter the Badside station you'll find a screwdriver stuck in the vending machine. Use the oil can on it and you'll be able to add it to your inventory. Also collect the radio, found on the far left of the platform.



One of the first times you board a train, you'll find an aerosol on the far left of the carriage. Add it to your inventory and drop the hose on top of it, creating an airgun. Stay on the train four stops to get back to Badside. Go back to the bar, talk to the Robowaiter and, while he stands in front of you, use the screwdriver on him to collect the circuit board. Drop the circuit board on the radio to make a remote control unit.

GETTING AROUND...

Once you've got the train token, you can get to the following stations and their associated locations:

SPACEPORT

The Spaceport (naturellement), plus a short walk to Badside.

THE HILL

The Art Gallery and the Mobster's Mansion.

REGURGI

The Police Station, the Bank and the Hot Dog stand.

EAST ERUK

The Zoo

BADSIDE

The Pawnbrokers, Paradise Club, Bar, Alley and Docks.

You need to go here next. Called the Docks, this location is found by going past the Bikers. Walking on to the boards triggers the appearance of the guard robot. Use the remote control on him and then collect the hat (located outside the craft on the railing, beneath the left-hand porthole). Go back to the pawnbroker's and give him the hat. He'll give you a carpet in exchange.

ER, THAT'S IT...

You're now ready to tackle the rest of the game. You'll find further hints in the captions to the other illustrations in this feature. Best of luck!

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CHEAT LAB

Strepsils if you've got any. Hmm? No, I know, my throat's been as sore as a monkey's ar-arr-ah-ha-hah! Hello! Didn't see you there. Welcome, welcome to the only part of the magazine dedicated, and do I mean dedicated, to giving you the very latest in tips, cheats and otherwise. And what better way of demonstrating our up-to-the-minuteness than to unroll a striggle of cheats (well you tell me what the collective noun is then) for the best games around today? None? I thought not. Okay, on with the show...

(How was that? Do you think anyone noticed I wasn't wearing trousers? No, I didn't think so either - my legs were mostly hidden after all... Hmm? We're still on the air? Oh, ahem. Sorry...)

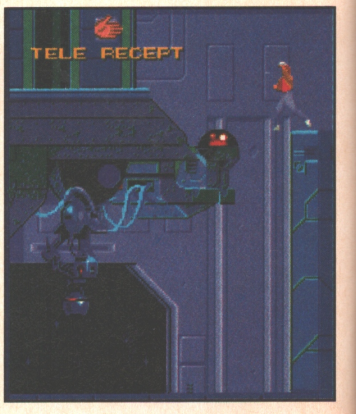
(FADE TO BLACK. CUE VOICE OVERS)

FLASHBACK

I'm not going to do a 'going wobbly' joke. Everybody does a 'going wobbly' joke. It isn't funny and the people are bored of it, okay? I'm going to do a 'going black and white' joke instead.

Level	Easy	Normal	Expert
1	Jaguar	Bantha	Tohold
2	Combel	Shiva	Picolo
3	Antic	Kasyyk	Fugu
4	Nolan	Sarlac	Capsul
5	Arthur	Maenoc	Zzzap
6	Shiryu	Sulust	Maniac
7	Render	Neptun	No way

...And Beluga takes you to the end sequence.



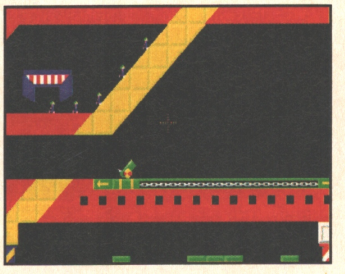
THE BIT WHERE WE ABSOLVE OURSELVES OF ANY BLAME...

Some of these cheats require you to mess around with data files and whatnot using file editors like PC Tools, XTree Gold or Norton Utilities. If you are in any way scared of doing this, or if you feel even the slightest bit out-of-your-depth then stop it immediately. Go back and play the game as normal. It's not worth the risk - okay? Oh, and always, always, always back-up any files you're about to mess with. If anything goes wrong, it's your fault, not ours. Just wanted to make that bit clear.

ULTIMA VII & THE SERPENT ISLE

If number one in the series was the Ultima, how come we've had seven more? Food for thought, isn't it? While you ponder that one though, try the following to make the game easie:

Type U7 ABCD_ (where _ is holding down Alt and typing 255) to load. You'll then find that pressing F2 will bring up the cheat menu (it's actually a programming menu so be careful what you change). F3 gives you a teleporting map. The same goes for Serpent Isle but type SERPENT PASS to load instead.



LEMMINGS 2

Don't you just love controversy? Ever since Danny Baker revealed that Lemmings don't actually commit suicide, all the stars of Psygnosis's cute little games have gone out on strike! It's true I tell you. So, since you can't use them in the game, you may want to try this little hackette instead.

Save a game in the highest savegame slot then load your editing program. Edit the file SAVE.DAT and change the code from data block C8 to:

3C 00 03 00

Repeat this pattern up to block 2A9. Now run the game and load the saved game. Using the map click on the ark at the centre of the screen and watch the end sequence. Then you can play any level.

FORMULA ONE GRAND PRIX

Amazing! A tip that doesn't actually involve messing with game files, typing the programmer's girlfriend's measurements on the high-score table or some other bizarre combination of arm and leg movements.Determine the nature of the track you're to race on and set your car up accordingly.

FAST SET-UP

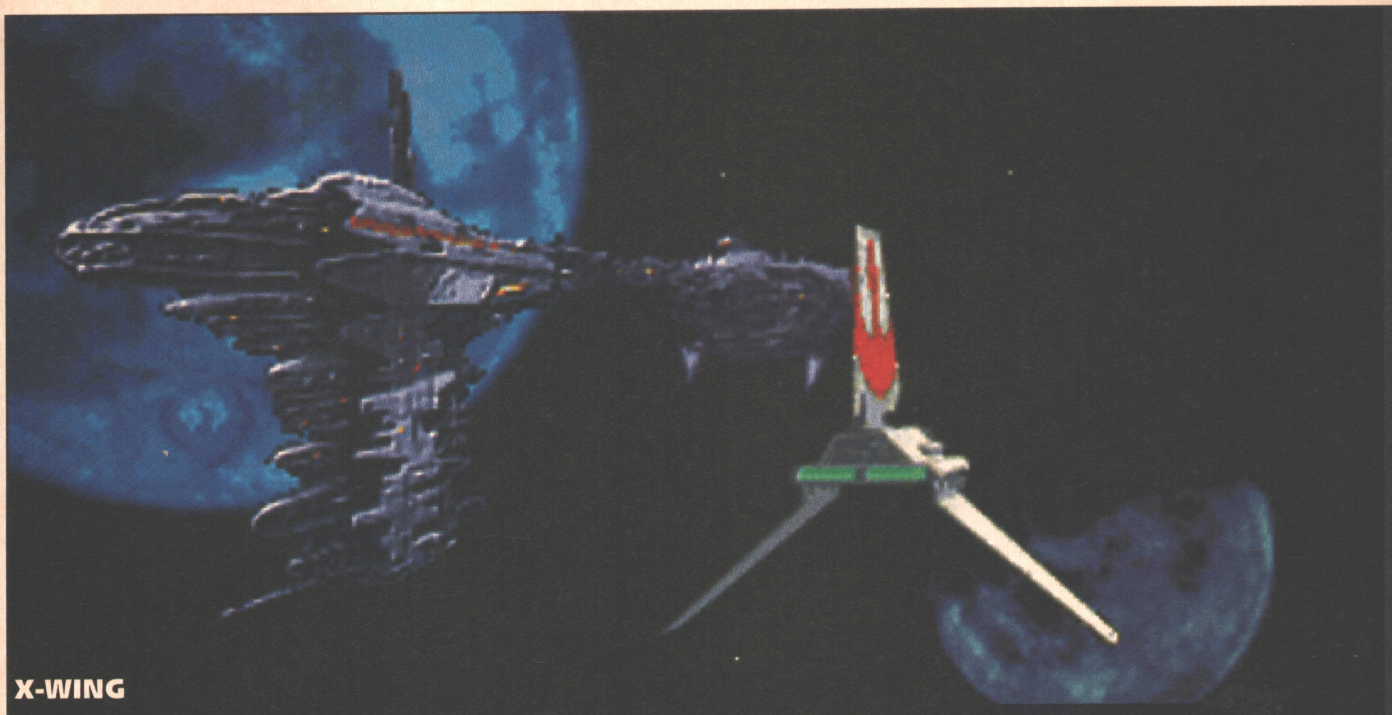
Front wing	25
Rear wing	20
Brake balance	02
Tyre compound	D (dry race)
Gear ratios:	1st – 25.64;
	2nd – 33.64;
	3rd – 41.64;
	4th – 49.64;
	5th – 58.64;
	6th – 67.64

MEDIUM SET-UP

Front wing	40
Rear wing	40
Brake balance	00
Tyre compound	D (dry race)
Gear ratios:	1st – 24.64;
	2nd – 32.64;
	3rd – 39.64;
	4th – 46.64;
	5th – 54.64;
	6th – 63.64

STREET SET-UP

Front wing	60
Rear wing	55
Brake balance	02
Tyre compound	D (dry race)
Gear ratios:	1st – 23.64;
	2nd – 29.64;
	3rd – 36.64;
	4th – 43.64;
	5th – 50.64;
	6th – 57.64



X-WING

"Use the Force, Luke," came the scratchy, badly-digitised voice in the young pilot's ears. It wasn't coming from the headset and none of the other X-Wings were transmitting so who was speaking? "Let go of your feelings and use the Force, Luke," it urged. "Sod off," said Luke, "I'm going to use this cheat instead."

Delete the files SATLITE1.BRF and SATLITE1.XWI and rename the files DSTAR1.BRF AND DSTAR1.XWI to SATLITE1.BRF and SATLITE1.XWI then when you play the satellite training missions in the X-Wing you'll play the Death star mission instead.

SYNDICATE

Yeah syndication, now we're talking. National coverage with me getting paid everytime I appear on a local station. Oh, it's a game - damn. (Mental note: Ask Dave for a pay rise) Alright, do the following for bountiful bonuses or something:

Start a new game and save it immediately in the first game slot. Load your file editor and edit the 00.GAM file. Scroll to the top and on the second line you should see four sets of 00's followed by four sets of numbers. Replace the numbers with FF, e.g:

00 00 00 00 FF FF FF FF

You should now have an unlimited supply of money. Happy?

ALONE IN THE DARK

More hacking. Honestly, it makes a grown man weep. Whatever happened to the good old honest player? The player that defeated games by using skill and cunning? The player that overcame obstacles with ease and was ready to impart his knowledge to a waiting populace? He's gone I'm afraid and we're stuck with tips like this:

Load a saved game into your editor. Change the value of the following bytes to FF for 255 of each item:

19,856	Oil Lamp Fuel
19,866	Rifle shots
19,882	Health
20,024	Revolver bullets

PRINCE OF PERSIA 2

Princely posers? Persian puzzlers? Ofian... orrible bits? Try the following remedy. Type PRINCE MAKINIT to start the game then press the following combinations for cheating fun:

Shift N	Skips to the next level.
Shift I	Inverts the screen. (Why? I don't know why. It just does okay?)
Shift T	Gains you an extra life.
Shift +	Increases the amount of time left to you.
Shift -	Decreases the amount of time left to you. (For hard-nuts I suppose. Stop bothering me.)
R	Resurrects your prince after an untimely demise.
K	Kills all the enemies on the screen.

DYNABLASTER

I lay down this challenge here and now. Anyone out there, anyone at all, that thinks they can even attempt to beat me at Dynablaster, then step forward and prepare to be slaughtered. Dexter Fletcher? Pah. Big Boy Barry? A mere sapling. Combat Cal? Not even worth considering. I am quite simply the greatest person ever to play the game and remain undefeated in every single game I've played. Here's a cheat for the one-player version.

When you get remote bombs, set some down where ever you fancy. Get out of their range and press the detonator button. As the bombs are exploding press the detonator button again rapidly. This gives you extra bombs to play with. Isn't that nice - although not for the other players...

And so we come to an end. The tips are dispatched, the games are solved and I'm reading the autocue in a much more professional manner smile pause for applause. Until next time (if there is one), goodbye wave say thanks.

YOURS FOR LESS THAN A FIVER

Finding games too expensive? Want to know how you can get the extra levels to Halloween Harry? Why not lend Dean Evans a fiver and let him lead you gently into the blossoming shareware market.

What can you get for £5 these days? Well, you can get a copy of What PC Games, three packets of Frazzles and a finger of Fudge; a tenth of Origin's Privateer; a packet of Blu-Tack plus two small posters from Athena; a taxi ride from Mile End to Piccadilly Circus; a good, high quality loofah... the list is practically endless.

But when it comes to buying PC games, like Frontier, TFX or even Cosmic Spacehead, your nice, crisp fiver isn't going to get you very far. But there are games around that cost as little as £10. If you're prepared to compromise a little on graphical quality and sound, then the shareware, freeware and public domain sectors have thousands of cheap programs, ranging from flight sims to platform games and chess games to shoot-em ups.

The idea behind freeware is very straight-forward: it's free. Freeware is written by people who don't want to charge for their programs. They are doing it for the common good, hoping to aid the DOS dummy with a useful utility or raise a toothy smile with a game. Public Domain software is essentially the same, but unlike freeware the authors don't retain copyright and you are free to distribute, change and generally do what you want with these programs once you've copied them.

Shareware is more widely used and the concept behind it is a simple but effective one. Let's say that you have programmed a game. It's a platform game featuring a cuddly squirrel, mutated killer-vegetables and 18 levels of tree-jumping, carrot-maiming action. Obviously you'd like other people to play your game and more importantly you'd like to make some money from it. But how do you go about it?

Well, the best way is to release the first third of your game (the first six levels) as shareware. By either uploading these levels to a general access BBS (bulletin board) or by contacting a recognised shareware library you can release what amounts to a playable demo of your digital masterpiece. Other people can then download it or send off for it, take a look and if they like what they see they can 'register' with you. For a small fee you will then send them the rest of the game. It's simple and, above all, it's very, very cheap.

Of course shareware games aren't just poor quality VGA platform games written by blokes in their dimly-lit garages. Far from it. In fact there are a number of highly professional games outfits around. The largest and most successful of these is Apogee, an American-based company that was the first to use shareware exclusively as a marketing and distribution tool.

Like Halloween Harry on the coverdisk, Apogee aim to provide an alternative to complicated commercial PC games. They produce quick-fix, easy-to-use arcade games of a very high quality, games that you can be playing within minutes of loading them up. There are no weighty manuals, no huge amounts of keys, just fast, frantic gameplay.

So if you've liked the look of our coverdisk, why not let What PC Games introduce you to the latest and arguably the best Apogee arcade games currently available (and we'll even take a peek at a few that aren't out yet too). Lets start off with...

HALLOWEEN HARRY

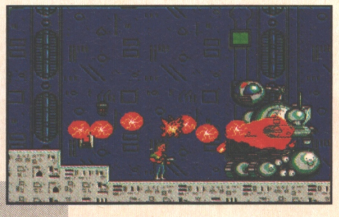
Halloween Harry is the first of a new generation of Apogee games, featuring a professional musical soundtrack and full 256-colour VGA graphics. If you've played our coverdisk (and if you haven't why not?) you'll already know the game's plot which concerns an evil alien and his attempts to turn mankind into mutant zombies.

Harry has a wide array of weaponry he can pick up as well as a jetpack to get him up into those hard-to-reach places that ordinary heroes just can't tackle. The weapons dispensers scattered over the levels give Harry access to photon cannons, guided missiles, grenades, shields and the powerful Omega 'smart' bomb. It's an arsenal that'll have the aliens quaking in their green slimy boots.

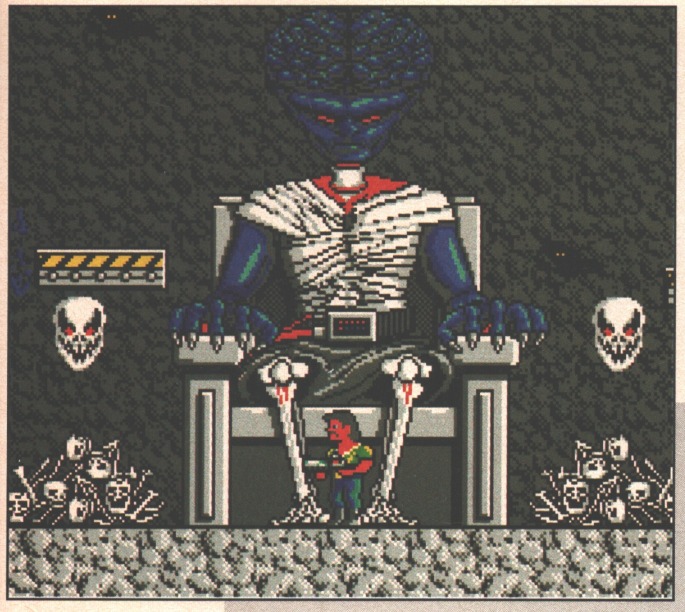
Halloween Harry also includes superb digitised sound effects, huge end-of-level boss aliens, three skill levels, secret rooms and bonus pick ups galore. This is a game that is a welcome diversion from the usual sub-standard PC platform games and comes heartily recommended. But of course, as you've played it, you know that already.

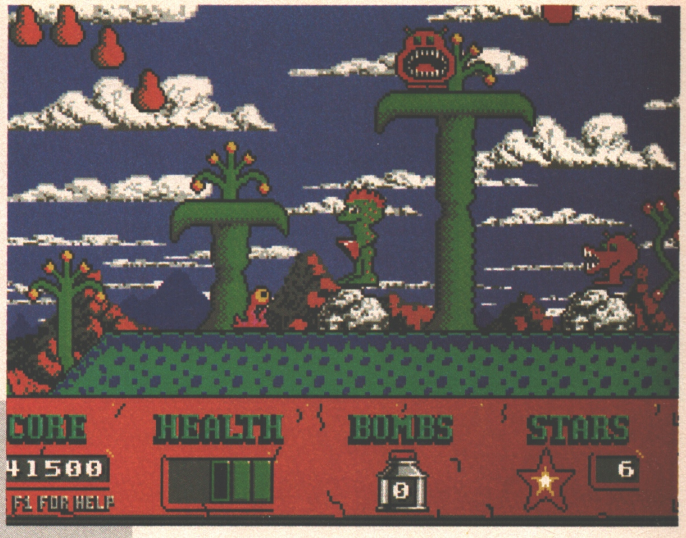
BIO MENACE

Now I don't know if you've noticed but Apogee tend to favour one sort of game style over any other. Know what it is? Any guesses? Yep, it's the old platform adventure. Take one implausible hero, add a vicious alien race



(Above) Bio Menace in gorey action. (Left) Halloween Harry - but you know that already,





(Left) Yet another impressive shot from Bio Menace.
(Above) The somewhat primitive-looking Cosmo's Cosmic Adventure, which plays better than it looks.

attempting to dominate the world and round it all off with a large gun and lots of power-ups.

Bio Menace follows this formula exactly. You are Snake Logan, a top CIA operative who likes to do things his own way. As the game begins, Metro City has fallen under attack from bands of hideous mutants, and while circling over the city on a recon patrol you are shot down and forced to crash land. Grabbing what meagre supplies you can find, you head out into the city to discover the source of the mutants and to save the city. In other words, a fairly standard sort of plot for this type of game

Eat lead alien trash! You will have to battle your way through a variety of levels, packed with evil mutants and robotic guards. As usual there are weapons pick-ups (including the Super Plasma Bolt and the Fire Ball), power ups and bonus levels. Have you got what it takes to cleanse a city? Do you think you're tough? Play Bio Menace and find out.

MONSTER BASH

It's yet another PLATFORM game. Johnny's dog Tex has been kidnapped by the evil Count Chuck, and it's the latest in a long string of mysterious animal disappearances. Luckily the monster under Johnny's bed (this is getting silly..) tells Johnny where Tex has been taken and tells him of a hidden passage in his wardrobe that will allow him to descend into Count Chuck's Underworld (even more silliness).

In the eerie caverns under the earth, Johnny uncovers the Count's evil plan - to turn all the cats and dogs into an army of undead monsters. With only his trusty slingshot as a weapon, Johnny must fight off the evil dead, free all the trapped family pets and escape back to the real world.

More shooting, more platform jumping and lots of silliness. Although Apogee don't get this tried and tested formula wrong very often, this time they did. Not one the company's best releases.

COMMANDER KEEN

You play Billy Blaze, an eight-year-old child genius who builds an interstellar spaceship in his back yard, using a Nintendo joystick for his flight controls and his mum's vacuum cleaner (heavily modified) for the ion propulsion system.

At the first faint hint of galactic trouble, Billy dons his brother's football helmet and becomes Commander Keen - defender of the Earth.

Commander Keen is Apogee's most successful platform series, comprising of four games: Commander Keen: Invasion of the Vorticons, Commander Keen: Goodbye Galaxy, Commander Keen: Aliens Ate My Babysitter and Keen Dreams: The Lost Levels. Keen was highly successful in the dark days when the PC had no good platform games. Some people say it still doesn't have any good platform games, so if you're bored with Zool and weary of Robocod, Commander Keen is a fun and cheap alternative.

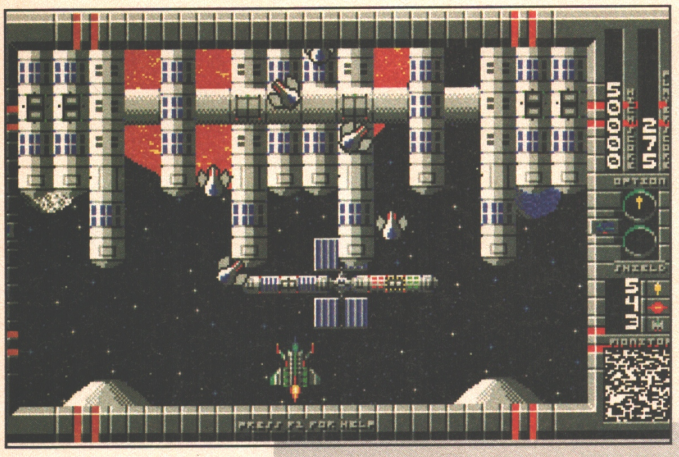
COSMO'S COSMIC ADVENTURE

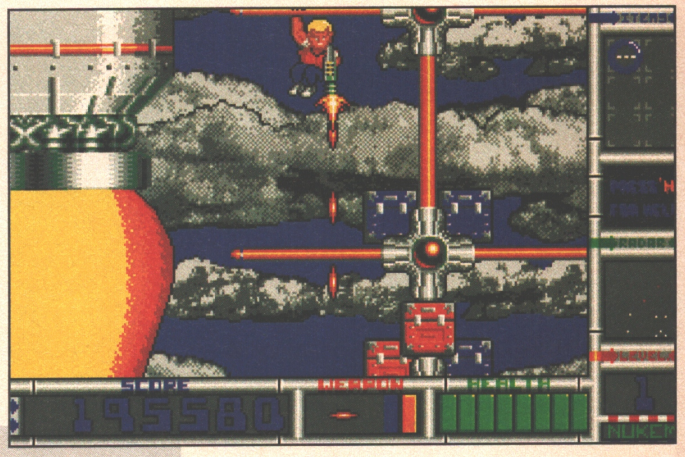
What's green with red spots, has suction hands and an overbite as bad as Bart Simpson? The answer is Cosmo, a young alien travelling to Disneyworld with his parents.

Unfortunately their ship is struck by a blazing comet, forcing them to land on an uncharted planet. Cosmo is separated from his parents and begins a frantic journey across the planet to save his mom and dad from the local natives before they are lightly fried and added to the evening menu.

A cross between Sonic the Hedgehog and Zool, Cosmo's Cosmic Adventure is a cheap alternative to the fast-paced, high-action antics of his more famous console counterparts.. Okay, so it isn't exactly like Sonic but it's still got trampolines, fruit-flavoured pick-ups, meanies, nasties and much, much more. It's alot of fun, in a quirky, alien 'not like Sonic at all really' sort of a way.

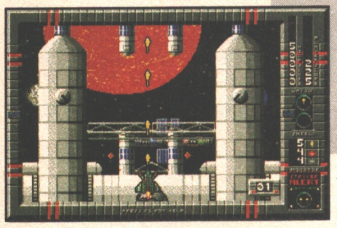
(Left and above) Some screens from Monster Bash - not one of Apogee's better releases.





(Left and above) Major Stryker - with three-level parallax.

(Above) Duke Nukem 2 - a bit of a retrograde step after the likes of Wolfenstein 3D.



MAJOR STRYKER

In the not-so-distant future the Earth has been invaded by evil alien marauders - the Kretons. Earth cannot fight back and it's forces, badly depleted after a brutal World War Three, are soon overrun by the repeated attacks of the Kretons. You are Major Harrison Stryker and you have been chosen to fly back to the alien's homeworld and to destroy the alien base.

Major Stryker is a vertically scrolling shoot-'em-up in the Xenon tradition. Yes, amazingly enough Apogee do program other things apart from platform games. Not very often but it does happen and Major Stryker is a refreshing change. Featuring triple parallax scrolling, you must pilot your fragile spaceship through dozens of dangerous scenarios including space stations, lava caves and alien cities.

If you're into action-packed, heart-pounding shoot-'em-ups, for less than a fiver Major Stryker is your ticket to adventure. It doesn't quite have the sheer excitement of a coin-op but as there's a woeful lack of shoot-em's on the PC, it will do.

WOLFENSTEIN 3D

This must be Apogee's most successful game of all time. You are William 'B.J' Blazkowicz and your mission is to infiltrate the tall, imposing Nazi fortress Castle Hollehammer to find the plans for Operation Eisenfaust. Rumour has it that the plans are in fact a blueprint for building the perfect army, and that this army would be created from the ranks of the dead.

Unfortunately you never found out. Captured in your attempt to steal the plans you are taken to Castle Wolfenstein for questioning and eventual execution. Luckily however you manage to overpower the guard, steal his gun and escape into the labyrinthine corridors of the castle.

Wolfenstein features some of the smoothest 3D scrolling ever seen in a computer game and since its release it's been ripped off left, right and centre. The aim is a simple one. Escape from the castle, shoot all the guards, steal all the treasure and find those elusive plans.

This game is a classic, proving that shareware titles aren't always poorly scrolling platform games in 16-colour VGA. In Wolfenstein the action is fast and furious and the visuals are so bloody that Apogee have given the game a voluntary PC-13 rating (equivalent to a film classification of '12').

Not a game for the faint hearted or children under 13. But for everybody else, this is a game that shouldn't be missed. Watch out though, playing Wolfenstein for too long induces motion sickness. I know it sounds bizarre, but it's true.

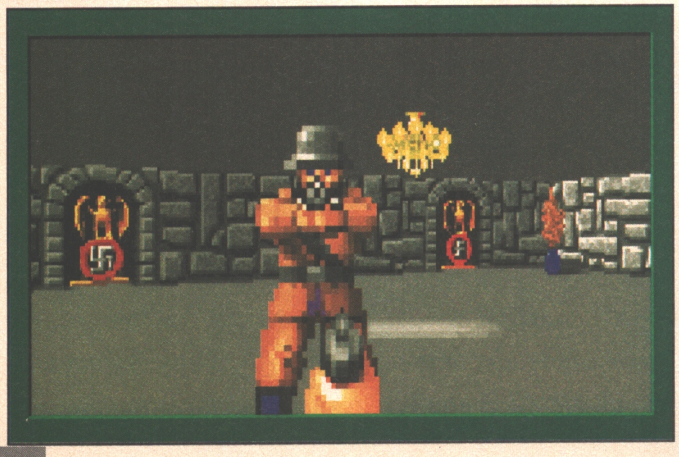
BLAKE STONE: ALIENS OF GOLD

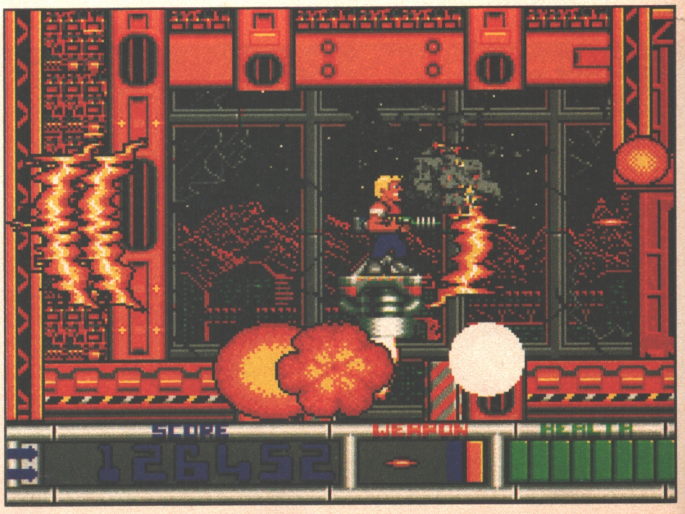
As British military agent Blake Stone you are thrust into deadly combat against the malevolence of a mad scientist and the insidious mutant army under his command. Dr Goldstern, driven by his insanity and hellbent on the annihilation of mankind, won't rest until he rules the universe.

Blake Stone is Apogee's next 3D shoot-'em-up. A mix of Wolfenstein and science fiction, Blake Stone has also gained a PC-13 rating for its realistic depiction of violence. If you liked Wolfenstein you will love Blake Stone which features more enemies, more graphics, more features and more action than ever before.

DUKE NUKEM 2

In 1991 Apogee released the original Duke Nukem adventure. Two years on and Duke Nukem returns. Set in Los Angeles in the near future, Duke has been kidnapped by an evil alien race called the Rigelitans. Little do these green guys know what a violent man they have unleashed...





Wolfenstein 3D in action. Compare it with Doom just across the way to see how much 3D technology has advanced in just the last year. Amazing, eh?

DOOM

I couldn't finish this article without mentioning Doom which has been universally acclaimed (at least is had in this office) as being even better than Wolfenstein. Designed by iD software, the makers of Wolfenstein, Doom features a smoothly scrolling first-person perspective view, higher resolution graphics and an attention to detail that is quite simply stunning. Fire a gun and the flashes from the barrel briefly light the room, attack your enemies with a variety of weapons including a shotgun, a plasma gun and even a chainsaw.

Sadly the pictures here just don't do Doom justice. It is without doubt the best and most atmospheric game I have seen in the shareware market. Best of all the first three levels will only cost you £5. If it seems that I'm raving madly about this game I make no apologies because I am. When Doom finally appears on the shareware scene, buy it. Forget your scrolling RPG's, Doom smashes them all into the ground.

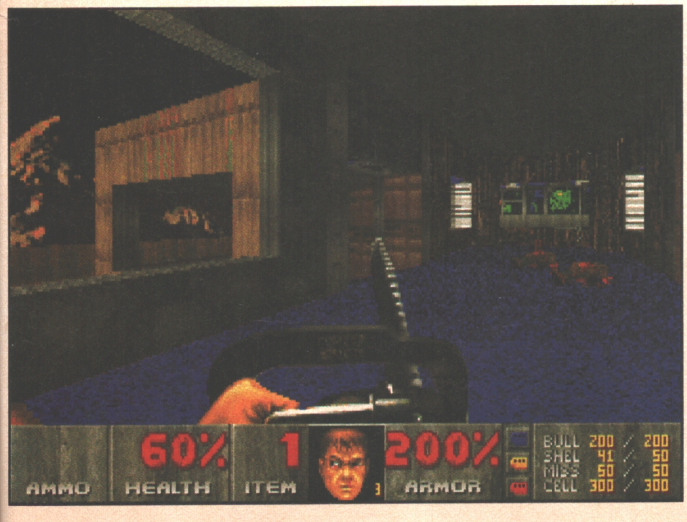
(Above and top) Blake Stone: Aliens Of Gold. It's a bit like Wolfenstein 3D but with genetic mutants swapped for the Nazis.

WHERE CAN I GET THIS LOVELY SHAREWARE?

If you'd like more information or you'd like to test-drive any of products mentioned above, here is a list of some of the friendly shareware libraries that you can call. Ask them to send you a catalogue of their games.

- Transend Services Ltd: (0274) 622228
- Testware UK Ltd: (0423) 886415
- Benetech Systems: (0553) 611231
- PD Soft: (0702) 466933
- PS Selections: (0474) 325802

Shareware libraries often charge different prices for the same games so try to shop around to find the best deal. You'll usually find that you'll pay by the disk not by the game. This means that if one disk costs £2 then a game like Halloween Harry (which comes on two disks) will set you back £4. Postage and packing is normally included and, if it isn't, go somewhere where it is.



(Left and above) The superb Doom. It's not quite finished yet, but when it is grab a copy as soon as possible.

bye bye

That's it. The end. Finito. There is no more. This special premiere issue of What PC Games is now exhausted of all the entertainment and information it can possibly provide. Now you can discard it, use it to line a musty old drawer, cut it up into pieces of confetti or even use it to swat flies with.

We hope you enjoyed reading it as much as we enjoyed writing it. We also hope that you would like to read something like it again in the near future, except with different words and pictures in it of course. Or maybe you think we wasted our time and should go back to our old jobs as temping dustmen.

Whatever your feelings - pleasure, disgust, bemusement, bafflement - about the magazine, why not write in and let us know what they are? You can drop us a line at: What PC Games, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Or, if you're affluent, you can Fax us on: (071) 972 6710.

We always like to receive letters from readers. It makes us feel wanted and, more typically, makes us realise that we not quite as bad at writing as we sometimes fear we are. At least most of us can spel proparly.

Anyway, that's enough. Close the magazine, throw it on the floor, turn off the light and get a good night's sleep. Tomorrow's a big day - for one thing you've got to work out how to defeat Purple Tentacle...

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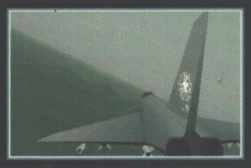
TFX

"It's more than a straight flight sim:, D.I.D. have emulated multi-million dollar flight simulators. When you play TFX the first thing that hits you is the detail of the landscape... over seven million square km appears on screen, with hills, roads and mountains all in the right place." THE EDGE

"The graphic detail is quite superb, with stunning visuals and strong sense of image, TFX is quite often like watching a movie... when I first saw TFX my jaw dropped so far it took me 15 minutes to find it again! It's fast, good looking and fun." PC REVIEW



Tactical Fighter Experiment... the only choice worth making where state of the art flight simulation is concerned.

Take control of one of three of the finest aircraft money can buy:

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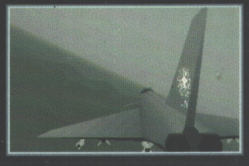

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